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The Third Circle

THE THIRD CIRCLE

BY

FRANK NORRIS

AUTHOR OF "THE PIT," "THE OCTOPUS," ETC.

INTRODUCTION BY

WILL IRWIN

NEW YORK: DODD, MEAD AND COMPANY
MCMXXII

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Introduction

IT used to be my duty, as sub editor of the old San Francisco *Wave*, to "put the paper to bed." We were printing a Seattle edition in those days of the Alaskan gold rush; and the last form had to be locked up on Tuesday night, that we might reach the news stands by Friday. Working short-handed, as all small weeklies do, we were everlastingly late with copy or illustrations or advertisements; and that Tuesday usually stretched itself out into Wednesday. Most often, indeed, the foreman and I pounded the last quoin into place at four or five o'clock Wednesday morning and went home with the milk-wagons—to rise at noon and start next week's paper going.

For Yelton, most patient and cheerful of foremen, those Tuesday night sessions meant steady work. I, for my part, had only to confer with him now and then on a "Caption" or to run over a late proof. In the heavy intervals of waiting, I killed time and gained instruction by reading the back files of the *Wave*, and especially that

part of the files which preserved the early, prentice work of Frank Norris.

He was a hero to us all in those days, as he will ever remain a heroic memory—that unique product of our Western soil, killed, for some hidden purpose of the gods, before the time of full blossom. He had gone East but a year since to publish the earliest in his succession of rugged, virile novels—"Moran of the Lady Letty," "McTeague," "Blix," "A Man's Woman," "The Octopus," and "The Pit." The East was just beginning to learn that he was great; we had known it long before. With a special interest, then, did I, his humble cub successor as sub editor and sole staff writer, follow that prentice work of his from the period of his first brief sketches, through the period of rough, brilliant short stories hewed out of our life in the Port of Adventures, to the period of that first serial which brought him into his own.

It was a surpassing study of the novelist in the making. J. O'Hara Cosgrave, owner, editor and burden-bearer of the *Wave,* was in his editing more an artist than a man of business. He loved "good stuff"; he could not bear to delete a distinctive piece of work just because the populace

would not understand. Norris, then, had a free hand. Whatever his thought of that day, whatever he had seen with the eye of his flash or the eye of his imagination, he might write and print. You began to feel him in the files of the year 1895, by certain distinctive sketches and fragments. You traced his writing week by week until the sketches became "Little Stories of the Pavements." Then longer stories, one every week, even such stories as "The Third Circle," "Miracle Joyeaux," and "The House with the Blinds"; then, finally, a novel, written *feuilleton* fashion week by week—"Moran of the Lady Letty." A curious circumstance attended the publication of "Moran" in the *Wave*. I discovered it myself during those Tuesday night sessions over the files; and it illustrates how this work was done. He began it in the last weeks of 1897, turning it out and sending it straight to the printer as part of his daily stint. The *Maine* was blown up February 14, 1898. In the later chapters of "Moran," he introduced the destruction of the *Maine* as an incident! It was this serial, brought to the attention of *McClure's Magazine*, which finally drew Frank Norris East.

"The studio sketches of a great novelist," Gellett Burgess has called these ventures and frag-

ments. Burgess and I, when the *Wave* finally died of too much merit, stole into the building by night and took away one set of old files. A harmless theft of sentiment, we told ourselves; for by moral right they belonged to us, the sole survivors in San Francisco of those who had helped make the *Wave*. And, indeed, by this theft we saved them from the great fire of 1906. When we had them safe at home, we spent a night running over them, marveling again at those rough creations of blood and nerve which Norris had made out of that city which was the first love of his wakened intelligence, and in which, so wofully soon afterward, he died.

I think that I remember them all, even now; not one but a name or a phrase would bring back to mind. Most vividly, perhaps, remains a little column of four sketches called "Fragments." One was a scene behind the barricades during the Commune—a gay *flaneur* of a soldier playing on a looted piano until a bullet caught him in the midst of a note. Another pictured an empty hotel room after the guest had left. Only that; but I always remember it when I first enter my room in a hotel. A third was the nucleus for the description of the "Dental Parlors" in McTeague. A

fourth, the most daring of all, showed a sodden workman coming home from his place of great machines. A fresh violet lay on the pavement. He, the primal brute in harness, picked it up. Dimly, the aesthetic sense woke in him. It gave him pleasure, a pleasure which called for some tribute. He put it between his great jaws and crushed it—the only way he knew.

Here collected are the longest and most important of his prentice products. Even without those shorter sketches whose interest is, after all, mainly technical, they are an incomparable study in the way a genius takes to find himself. It is as though we saw a complete collection of Rembrandt's early sketches, say—full technique and co-ordination not yet developed, but all the basic force and vision there. Admirable in themselves, these rough-hewn tales, they are most interesting when compared with the later work which the world knows, and when taken as a melancholy indication of that power of growth which was in him and which must have led, if the masters of fate had only spared him, to the highest achievement in letters.

WILL IRWIN.

March, 1909.

The Third Circle

CHAPTER I

THERE are more things in San Francisco's Chinatown than are dreamed of in Heaven and earth. In reality there are three parts of Chinatown—the part the guides show you, the part the guides don't show you, and the part that no one ever hears of. It is with the latter part that this story has to do. There are a good many stories that might be written about this third circle of Chinatown, but believe me, they never will be written—at any rate not until the "town" has been, as it were, drained off from the city, as one might drain a noisome swamp, and we shall be able to see the strange, dreadful life that wallows down there in the lowest ooze of the place—wallows and grovels there in the mud and in the dark. If you don't think this is true, ask some of the Chinese detectives (the regular squad are not to be relied

on), ask them to tell you the story of the Lee On Ting affair, or ask them what was done to old Wong Sam, who thought he could break up the trade in slave girls, or why Mr. Clarence Lowney (he was a clergyman from Minnesota who believed in direct methods) is now a "dangerous" inmate of the State Asylum—ask them to tell you why Matsokura, the Japanese dentist, went back to his home lacking a face—ask them to tell you why the murderers of Little Pete will never be found, and ask them to tell you about the little slave girl, Sing Yee, or—no, on the second thought, don't ask for that story.

The tale I am to tell you now began some twenty years ago in a See Yup restaurant on Waverly Place—long since torn down—where it will end I do not know. I think it is still going on. It began when young Hillegas and Miss Ten Eyck (they were from the East, and engaged to be married) found their way into the restaurant of the Seventy Moons, late in the evening of a day in March. (It was the year after the downfall of Kearney and the discomfiture of the sandlotters.)

"What a dear, quaint, curious old place!" exclaimed Miss Ten Eyck.

She sat down on an ebony stool with its marble seat, and let her gloved hands fall into her lap, looking about her at the huge hanging lanterns, the gilded carven screens, the lacquer work, the inlay work, the coloured glass, the dwarf oak trees growing in Satsuma pots, the marquetry, the painted matting, the incense jars of brass, high as a man's head, and all the grotesque jim-crackery of the Orient. The restaurant was deserted at that hour. Young Hillegas pulled up a stool opposite her and leaned his elbows on the table, pushing back his hat and fumbling for a cigarette.

"Might just as well be in China itself," he commented.

"Might?" she retorted; "we are in China, Tom —a little bit of China dug out and transplanted here. Fancy all America and the Nineteenth Century just around the corner! Look! You can even see the Palace Hotel from the window. See out yonder, over the roof of that temple— the Ming Yen, isn't it?—and I can actually make out Aunt Harriett's rooms."

"I say, Harry (Miss Ten Eyck's first name was Harriett) let's have some tea."

"Tom, you're a genius! Won't it be fun! Of

course we must have some tea. What a lark! And you can smoke if you want to."

"This is the way one ought to see places," said Hillegas, as he lit a cigarette; "just nose around by yourself and discover things. Now, the guides never brought us here."

"No, they never did. I wonder why? Why, we just found it out by ourselves. It's ours, isn't it, Tom, dear, by right of discovery?"

At that moment Hillegas was sure that Miss Ten Eyck was quite the most beautiful girl he ever remembered to have seen. There was a daintiness about her—a certain chic trimness in her smart tailor-made gown, and the least perceptible tilt of her crisp hat that gave her the last charm. Pretty she certainly was—the fresh, vigorous, healthful prettiness only seen in certain types of unmixed American stock. All at once Hillegas reached across the table, and, taking her hand, kissed the little crumpled round of flesh that showed where her glove buttoned.

The China boy appeared to take their order, and while waiting for their tea, dried almonds, candied fruit and watermelon rinds, the pair wandered out upon the overhanging balcony and looked down into the darkening streets.

"There's that fortune-teller again," observed Hillegas, presently. "See—down there on the steps of the joss house?"

"Where? Oh, yes, I see."

"Let's have him up. Shall we? We'll have him tell our fortunes while we're waiting."

Hillegas called and beckoned, and at last got the fellow up into the restaurant.

"Hoh! You're no Chinaman," said he, as the fortune-teller came into the circle of the lantern-light. The other showed his brown teeth.

"Part Chinaman, part Kanaka."

"Kanaka?"

"All same Honolulu. Sabe? Mother Kanaka lady—washum clothes for sailor peoples down Kaui way," and he laughed as though it were a huge joke.

"Well, say, Jim," said Hillegas; "we want you to tell our fortunes. You sabe? Tell the lady's fortune. Who she going to marry, for instance."

"No fortune—tattoo."

"Tattoo?"

"Um. All same tattoo—three, four, seven, plenty lil birds on lady's arm. Hey? You want tattoo?"

He drew a tattooing needle from his sleeve

and motioned towards Miss Ten Eyck's arm.

"Tattoo my arm? What an idea! But wouldn't it be funny, Tom? Aunt Hattie's sister came back from Honolulu with the prettiest little butterfly tattooed on her finger. I've half a mind to try. And it would be so awfully queer and original."

"Let him do it on your finger, then. You never could wear evening dress if it was on your arm."

"Of course. He can tattoo something as though it was a ring, and my marquise can hide it."

The Kanaka-Chinaman drew a tiny fantastic-looking butterfly on a bit of paper with a blue pencil, licked the drawing a couple of times, and wrapped it about Miss Ten Eyck's little finger—the little finger of her left hand. The removal of the wet paper left an imprint of the drawing. Then he mixed his ink in a small sea-shell, dipped his needle, and in ten minutes had finished the tattooing of a grotesque little insect, as much butterfly as anything else.

"There," said Hillegas, when the work was done and the fortune-teller gone his way; "there you are, and it will never come out. It won't do for you now to plan a little burglary, or forge a little check, or slay a little baby for the coral round its

neck, 'cause you can always be identified by that butterfly upon the little finger of your left hand."

"I'm almost sorry now I had it done. Won't it ever come out? Pshaw! Anyhow I think it's very chic," said Harriett Ten Eyck.

"I say, though!" exclaimed Hillegas, jumping up; "where's our tea and cakes and things? It's getting late. We can't wait here all evening. I'll go out and jolly that chap along."

The Chinaman to whom he had given the order was not to be found on that floor of the restaurant. Hillegas descended the stairs to the kitchen. The place seemed empty of life. On the ground floor, however, where tea and raw silk was sold, Hillegas found a Chinaman figuring up accounts by means of little balls that slid to and fro upon rods. The Chinaman was a very gorgeous-looking chap in round horn spectacles and a costume that looked like a man's nightgown, of quilted blue satin.

"I say, John," said Hillegas to this one, "I want some tea. You sabe?—up stairs—restaurant. Give China boy order—he no come. Get plenty much move on. Hey?"

The merchant turned and looked at Hillegas over his spectacles.

"Ah," he said, calmly, "I regret that you have

been detained. You will, no doubt, be attended to presently. You are a stranger in China-town?"

"Ahem!—well, yes—I—we are."

"Without doubt—without doubt!" murmured the other.

"I suppose you are the proprietor?" ventured Hillegas.

"I? Oh, no! My agents have a silk house here. I believe they sub-let the upper floors to the See Yups. By the way, we have just received a consignment of India silk shawls you may be pleased to see."

He spread a pile upon the counter, and selected one that was particularly beautiful.

"Permit me," he remarked gravely, "to offer you this as a present to your good lady."

Hillegas's interest in this extraordinary Oriental was aroused. Here was a side of the Chinese life he had not seen, nor even suspected. He stayed for some little while talking to this man, whose bearing might have been that of Cicero before the Senate assembled, and left him with the understanding to call upon him the next day at the Consulate. He returned to the restaurant to find Miss

Ten Eyck gone. He never saw her again. No white man ever did.

* * * * * *

There is a certain friend of mine in San Francisco who calls himself Manning. He is a Plaza bum—that is, he sleeps all day in the old Plaza (that shoal where so much human jetsom has been stranded), and during the night follows his own devices in Chinatown, one block above. Manning was at one time a deep-sea pearl diver in Oahu, and, having burst his ear drums in the business, can now blow smoke out of either ear. This accomplishment first endeared him to me, and latterly I found out that he knew more of Chinatown than is meet and right for a man to know. The other day I found Manning in the shade of the Stevenson ship, just rousing from the effects of a jag on undiluted gin, and told him, or rather recalled to him the story of Harriett Ten Eyck.

"I remember," he said, resting on an elbow and chewing grass. "It made a big noise at the time, but nothing ever came of it—nothing except a long row and the cutting down of one of Mr. Hillegas's Chinese detectives in Gambler's Alley.

The See Yups brought a chap over from Peking just to do the business."

"Hachet-man?" said I.

"No," answered Manning, spitting green; "he was a two-knife Kai-Gingh."

"As how?"

"Two knives—one in each hand—cross your arms and then draw 'em together, right and left, scissor-fashion—damn near slashed his man in two. He got five thousand for it. After that the detectives said they couldn't find much of a clue."

"And Miss Ten Eyck was not so much as heard from again?"

"No," answered Manning, biting his finger-nails. "They took her to China, I guess, or may be up to Oregon. That sort of thing was new twenty years ago, and that's why they raised such a row, I suppose. But there are plenty of women living with Chinamen now, and nobody thinks anything about it, and they are Canton Chinamen, too—lowest kind of coolies. There's one of them up in St. Louis Place, just back of the Chinese theatre, and she's a Sheeny. There's a queer team for you—the Hebrew and the Mongolian—and they've got a kid with red, crinkly hair, who's a rubber in a Hammam bath. Yes,

it's a queer team, and there's three more white women in a slave girl joint under Ah Yee's tan room. There's where I get my opium. They can talk a little English even yet. Funny thing—one of 'em's dumb, but if you get her drunk enough she'll talk a little English to you. It's a fact! I've seen 'em do it with her often—actually get her so drunk that she can talk. Tell you what," added Manning, struggling to his feet, "I'm going up there now to get some dope. You can come along, and we'll get Sadie (Sadie's her name) we'll get Sadie full, and ask her if she ever heard about Miss Ten Eyck. They do a big business," said Manning, as we went along. "There's Ah Yeo and these three women and a policeman named Yank. They get all the yen shee—that's the cleanings of the opium pipes, you know, and make it into pills and smuggle it into the cons over at San Quentin prison by means of the trusties. Why, they'll make five dollars worth of dope sell for thirty by the time it gets into the yard over at the Pen. When I was over there, I saw a chap knifed behind a jute mill for a pill as big as a pea. Ah Yee gets the stuff, the three women roll it into pills, and the policeman, Yank, gets it over to the trusties somehow. Ah Yee is independent

rich by now, and the policeman's got a bank account."

"And the women?'

"Lord! they're slaves—Ah Yee's slaves! They get the swift kick most generally."

Manning and I found Sadie and her two companions four floors underneath the tan room, sitting cross-legged in a room about as big as a big trunk. I was sure they were Chinese women at first, until my eyes got accustomed to the darkness of the place. They were dressed in Chinese fashion, but I noted soon that their hair was brown and the bridges of each one's nose was high. They were rolling pills from a jar of yen shee that stood in the middle of the floor, their fingers twinkling with a rapidity that was somehow horrible to see.

Manning spoke to them briefly in Chinese while he lit a pipe, and two of them answered with the true Canton sing-song—all vowels and no consonants.

"That one's Sadie," said Manning, pointing to the third one, who remained silent the while. I turned to her. She was smoking a cigar, and from time to time spat through her teeth man-fashion. She was a dreadful-looking beast of a woman, wrinkled like a shriveled apple, her teeth

quite black from nicotine, her hands bony and prehensile, like a hawk's claws—but a white woman beyond all doubt. At first Sadie refused to drink, but the smell of Manning's can of gin removed her objections, and in half an hour she was hopelessly loquacious. What effect the alcohol had upon the paralysed organs of her speech I cannot say. Sober, she was tongue-tied—drunk, she could emit a series of faint bird-like twitterings that sounded like a voice heard from the bottom of a well.

"Sadie," said Manning, blowing smoke out of his ears, "what makes you live with Chinamen? You're a white girl. You got people somewhere. Why don't you get back to them?"

Sadie shook her head.

"Like um China boy better," she said, in a voice so faint we had to stoop to listen. "Ah Yee's pretty good to us—plenty to eat, plenty to smoke, and as much yen shee as we can stand. Oh, I don't complain."

"You know you can get out of this whenever you want. Why don't you make a run for it some day when you're out? Cut for the Mission House on Sacramento street—they'll be good to you there."

"Oh!" said Sadie, listlessly, rolling a pill between her stained palms, "I been here so long I guess I'm kind of used to it. I've about got out of white people's ways by now. They wouldn't let me have my yen shee and my cigar, and that's about all I want nowadays. You can't eat yen shee long and care for much else, you know. Pass that gin along, will you? I'm going to faint in a minute."

"Wait a minute," said I, my hand on Manning's arm. "How long have you been living with Chinamen, Sadie?"

"Oh, I don't know. All my life, I guess. I can't remember back very far—only spots here and there. Where's that gin you promised me?"

"Only in spots?" said I; "here a little and there a little—is that it? Can you remember how you came to take up with this kind of life?"

"Sometimes I can and sometimes I can't," answered Sadie. Suddenly her head rolled upon her shoulder, her eyes closing. Manning shook her roughly:

"Let be! let be!" she exclaimed, rousing up; "I'm dead sleepy. Can't you see?"

"Wake up, and keep awake, if you can," said Manning; "this gentleman wants to ask you something."

"Ah Yee bought her from a sailor on a junk in the Pei Ho river," put in one of the other women.

"How about that, Sadie?" I asked. "Were you ever on a junk in a China river? Hey? Try and think?"

"I don't know," she said. "Sometimes I think I was. There's lots of things I can't explain, but it's because I can't remember far enough back."

"Did you ever hear of a girl named Ten Eyck—Harriett Ten Eyck—who was stolen by Chinamen here in San Francisco a long time ago?"

There was a long silence. Sadie looked straight before her, wide-eyed, the other women rolled pills industriously, Manning looked over my shoulder at the scene, still blowing smoke through his ears; then Sadie's eyes began to close and her head to loll sideways.

"My cigar's gone out," she muttered. "You said you'd have gin for me. Ten Eyck! Ten Eyck! No, I don't remember anybody named that." Her voice failed her suddenly, then she whispered:

"Say, how did I get that on me?"

She thrust out her left hand, and I saw a butterfly tattooed on the little finger.

The House With the Blinds

The House With the Blinds

IT is a thing said and signed and implicitly believed in by the discerning few that San Francisco is a place wherein Things can happen. There are some cities like this—cities that have come to be picturesque—that offer opportunities in the matter of background and local colour, and are full of stories and dramas and novels, written and unwritten. There seems to be no adequate explanation for this state of things, but you can't go about the streets anywhere within a mile radius of Lotta's fountain without realising the peculiarity, just as you would realise the hopelessness of making anything out of Chicago, fancy a novel about Chicago or Buffalo, let us say, or Nashville, Tennessee. There are just three big cities in the United States that are "story cities"—New York, of course, New Orleans, and best of the lot, San Francisco. *

* Answered by O. Henry in "A Municipal Report" in the vol. "Strictly Business", ny. Doubleday Page, 1910

MS. NOTE BY MR. PRESCOTT

Here, if you put yourself in the way of it, you shall see life uncloaked and bare of convention—the raw, naked thing, that perplexes and fascinates—life that involves death of the sudden and swift variety, the jar and shock of unleased passions, the friction of men foregathered from every ocean, and you may touch upon the edge of mysteries for which there is no explanation—little eddies on the surface of unsounded depths, sudden outflashings of the inexplicable—troublesome, disquieting, and a little fearful.

About this "House With the Blinds" now.

If you go far enough afield, with your face towards Telegraph Hill, beyond Chinatown, beyond the Barbary Coast, beyond the Mexican quarter and Luna's restaurant, beyond even the tamale factory and the Red House, you will come at length to a park in a strange, unfamiliar, unfrequented quarter. You will know the place by reason of a granite stone set up there by the Geodetic surveyors, for some longitudinal purposes of their own, and by an enormous flagstaff erected in the center. Stockton street flanks it on one side and Powell on the other. It is an Italian quarter as much as anything else, and the Societa Alleanza holds dances in a big white hall hard by. The

Russian Church, with its minarets (that look for all the world like inverted balloons) overlook it on one side, and at the end of certain seaward streets you may see the masts and spars of wheat ships and the Asiatic steamers. The park lies in a valley between Russian and Telegraph Hills, and in August and early September the trades come flogging up from the bay, overwhelming one with sudden, bulging gusts that strike downward, blanket-wise and bewildering. There are certain residences here where, I am sure, sea-captains and sailing masters live, and on one corner is an ancient house with windows opening door-fashion upon a deep veranda, that was used as a custom office in Mexican times.

I have a very good friend who is a sailing-master aboard the *"Mary Baker,"* a full-rigged wheat ship, a Cape Horner, and the most beautiful thing I ever remember to have seen. Occasionally I am invited to make a voyage with him as supercargo, an invitation which you may be sure I accept. Such an invitation came to me one day some four or five years ago, and I made the trip with him to Calcutta and return.

The day before the *"Mary Baker"* cast off I had been aboard (she was lying in the stream off

Meigg's wharf) attending to the stowing of my baggage and the appointment of my stateroom. The yawl put me ashore at three in the afternoon, and I started home via the park I have been speaking about. On my way across the park I stopped in front of that fool Geodetic stone, wondering what it might be. And while I stood there puzzling about it, a nurse-maid came up and spoke to me.

The story of "The House With the Blinds" begins here.

The nurse-maid was most dreadfully drunk, her bonnet was awry, her face red and swollen, and one eye was blackened. She was not at all pleasant. In the baby carriage, which she dragged behind her, an overgrown infant yelled like a sabbath of witches.

"Look here," says she; "you're a gemmleman, and I wantcher sh'd help me outen a fix. I'm in a fix, s'wat I am—a damn bad fix."

I got that fool stone between myself and this object, and listened to it pouring out an incoherent tirade against some man who had done it dirt, b'Gawd, and with whom it was incumbent I should fight, and she was in a fix, s'what she was, and could I, who was evidently a perfick gemmleman,

oblige her with four bits? All this while the baby yelled till my ears sang again. Well, I gave her four bits to get rid of her, but she stuck to me yet the closer, and confided to me that she lived in that house over yonder, she did—the house with the blinds, and was nurse-maid there, so she was, b'Gawd. But at last I got away and fled in the direction of Stockton street. As I was going along, however, I reflected that the shrieking infant was somebody's child, and no doubt popular in the house with the blinds. The parents ought to know that its nurse got drunk and into fixes. It was a duty—a dirty duty—for me to inform upon her.

Much as I loathed to do so I turned towards the house with the blinds. It stood hard by the Russian Church, a huge white-painted affair, all the windows closely shuttered and a bit of stained glass in the front door—quite the most pretentious house in the row. I had got directly opposite, and was about to cross the street when, lo! around the corner, marching rapidly, and with blue coats flapping, buttons and buckles flashing, came a squad of three, seven, nine—ten policemen. They marched straight upon the house with the blinds.

I am not brilliant nor adventurous, but I have

been told that I am good, and I do strive to be respectable, and pay my taxes and pew rent. As a corollary to this, I loathed with a loathing unutterable to be involved in a mess of any kind. The squad of policemen were about to enter the house with the blinds, and not for worlds would I have been found by them upon its steps. The nurse-girl might heave that shrieking infant over the cliff of Telegraph Hill, it were all one with me. So I shrank back upon the sidewalk and watched what followed.

Fifty yards from the house the squad broke into a run, swarmed upon the front steps, and in a moment were thundering upon the front door till the stained glass leaped in its leads and shivered down upon their helmets. And then, just at this point, occurred an incident which, though it had no bearing upon or connection with this yarn, is quite queer enough to be set down. The shutters of one of the top-story windows opened slowly, like the gills of a breathing fish, the sash raised some six inches with a reluctant wail, and a hand groped forth into the open air. On the sill of the window was lying a gilded Indian-club, and while I watched, wondering, the hand closed upon it, drew it under the sash, the window dropped guillotine-

fashion, and the shutters clapped to like the shutters of a cuckoo clock. Why was the Indian-club lying on the sill? Why, in Heaven's name, was it gilded? Why did the owner of that mysterious groping hand, seize upon it at the first intimation of danger? I don't know—I never will know. But I do know that the thing was eldritch and uncanny, ghostly even, in the glare of that cheerless afternoon's sun, in that barren park, with the trade winds thrashing up from the seaward streets.

Suddenly the door crashed in. The policemen vanished inside the house. Everything fell silent again. I waited for perhaps fifty seconds—waited, watching and listening, ready for anything that might happen, expecting I knew not what—everything.

Not more than five minutes had elapsed when the policemen began to reappear. They came slowly, and well they might, for they carried with them the inert bodies of six gentlemen. When I say carried I mean it in its most literal sense, for never in all my life have I seen six gentlemen so completely, so thoroughly, so hopelessly and helplessly intoxicated. Well dressed they were, too, one of them even in full dress. Salvos of artillery could not have awakened that drunken half dozen,

and I doubt if any one of them could even have been racked into consciousness.

Three hacks appeared (note that the patrol-wagon was conspicuously absent), the six were loaded upon the cushions, the word was given and one by one the hacks rattled down Stockton street and disappeared in the direction of the city. The captain of the squad remained behind for a few moments, locked the outside doors in the deserted shuttered house, descended the steps, and went his way across the park, softly whistling a quickstep. In time he too vanished. The park, the rows of houses, the windflogged streets, resumed their normal quiet. The incident was closed.

Or was it closed? Judge you now. Next day I was down upon the wharves, gripsack in hand, capped and clothed for a long sea voyage. The *"Mary Baker's"* boat was not yet come ashore, but the beauty lay out there in the stream, flirting with a bustling tug that circled about her, coughing uneasily at intervals. Idle sailormen, 'longshoremen and stevedores sat upon the stringpiece of the wharf, chewing slivers and spitting reflectively into the water. Across the intervening stretch of bay came the noises from the *"Mary Baker's"* decks—noises that were small and distinct, as if heard

through a telephone, the rattle of blocks, the straining of a windlass, the bos'n's whistle, and once the noise of sawing. A white crusier sat solidly in the waves over by Alcatraz, and while I took note of her the flag was suddenly broken out and I heard the strains of the ship's band. The morning was fine. Tamalpais climbed out of the water like a rousing lion. In a few hours we would be off on a voyage to the underside of the earth. There was a note of gayety in the nimble air, and one felt that the world was young after all, and that it was good to be young with her.

A bum-boat woman came down the wharf, corpulent and round, with a roll in her walk that shook first one fat cheek and then the other. She was peddling trinkets amongst the wharf-loungers —pocket combs, little round mirrors, shoestrings and collar-buttons. She knew them all, or at least was known to all of them, and in a few moments she was retailing to them the latest news of the town. Soon I caught a name or two, and on the instant was at some pains to listen. The bum-boat woman was telling the story of the house with the blinds:

"Sax of um, an' nobs ivry wan. But that bad wid bug-juice! Whoo! Niver have Oi seen the

bate! An' divil a wan as can remimber owt for two days by. Bory-eyed they were; struck dumb an' deef an' dead wid whiskey and bubble-wather. Not a manjack av um can tell the tale, but wan av um used his knife cruel bad. Now which wan was it? Howse the coort to find out?"

It appeared that the house with the blinds was, or had been, a gambling house, and what I had seen had been a raid. Then the rest of the story came out, and the mysteries began to thicken. That same evening, after the arrest of the six inebriates, the house had been searched. The police had found evidences of a drunken debauch of a monumental character. But they had found more. In a closet under the stairs the dead body of a man, a well dressed fellow—beyond a doubt one of the party—knifed to death by dreadful slashes in his loins and at the base of his spine in true evil hand-over-back fashion.

Now this is the mystery of the house with the blinds.

Beyond all doubt, one of the six drunken men had done the murder. Which one? How to find out? So completely were they drunk that not a single one of them could recall anything of the

previous twelve hours. They had come out there with their friend the day before. They woke from their orgie to learn that one of them had worried him to his death by means of a short palm-broad dagger taken from a trophy of Persian arms that hung over a divan.

Whose hand had done it? Which one of them was the murdered? I could fancy them—I think I can see them now—sitting there in their cells, each man apart, withdrawn from his fellow-reveler, and each looking furtively into his fellow's face, asking himself, "Was it you? Was it you? or was it I? Which of us, in God's name, has done this thing?"

Well, it was never known. When I came back to San Francisco a year or so later I asked about the affair of the house with the blinds, and found that it had been shelved with the other mysterious crimes. The six men had actually been "discharged for the want of evidence."

But for a long time the thing harassed me. More than once since I have gone to that windy park, with its quivering flagstaff and Geodetic monument, and, sitting on a bench opposite the house, asked myself again and again the bootless questions. Why had the drunken nurse-maid men-

tioned the house to me in the first place? And why at that particular time? Why had she lied to me in telling me that she lived there? Why was that gilded Indian-club on the sill of the upper window? And whose—here's a point—whose was the hand that drew it inside the house? And then, of course, last of all, the ever recurrent question, which one of those six inebriates should have stood upon the drop and worn the cap—which one of the company had knifed his friend and bundled him into that closet under the stairs? Had he done it during the night of the orgie, or before it? Was his friend drunk at the time, or sober? I never could answer these questions, and I suppose I shall never know the secret of "The House With the Blinds."

A Greek family lives there now, and rent the upper story to a man who blows the organ in the Russian Church, and to two Japanese, who have a photograph gallery on Stockton street. I wonder to what use they have put the little closet under the stairs?

Little Dramas of the Curbstone

Little Dramas of the Curbstone

THE first Little Drama had for backing the red brick wall of the clinic at the Medical Hospital, and the calcium light was the feeble glimmer of a new-lighted street lamp, though it was yet early in the evening and quite light. There were occasional sudden explosions of a northeast wind at the street corners, and at long intervals an empty cable-car trundled heavily past with a strident whirring of jostled glass windows. Nobody was in sight—the street was deserted. There was the pale red wall of the clinic, severe as that of a prison, the livid grey of the cement sidewalk, and above the faint greenish blue of a windy sky. A door in the wall of the hospital opened, and a woman and a young boy came out. They were dressed darkly, and at once their two black figures detached themselves violently against the pale blue of the background. They made the picture. All

the faint tones of the wall and the sky and the grey-brown sidewalk focused immediately upon them. They came across the street to the corner upon which I stood, and the woman asked a direction. She was an old woman, and poorly dressed. The boy, I could see, was her son. Him I took notice of, for she led him to the steps of the nearest house and made him sit down upon the lowest one. She guided all his movements, and he seemed to be a mere figure of wax in her hands. She stood over him, looking at him critically, and muttering to herself. Then she turned to me, and her muttering rose to a shrill, articulate plaint:

"Ah, these fool doctors—these dirty beasts of medical students! They impose upon us because we're poor and rob us and tell us lies."

Upon this I asked her what her grievance was, but she would not answer definitely, putting her chin in the air and nodding with half-shut eyes, as if she could say a lot about that if she chose.

"Your son is sick?" said I.

"Yes—or no—not sick; but he's blind, and—and—he's blind and he's an idiot—born that way—blind and idiot."

Blind and an idiot! Blind and an idiot! Will you think of that for a moment, you with your full

stomachs, you with your brains, you with your two sound eyes. Born blind and idiotic! Do you fancy the horror of that thing? Perhaps you cannot, nor perhaps could I myself have conceived of what it meant to be blind and an idiot had I not seen that woman's son in front of the clinic, in the empty, windy street, where nothing stirred, and where there was nothing green. I looked at him as he sat there, tall, narrow, misshapen. His ready-made suit, seldom worn, but put on that day because of the weekly visit to the clinic, hung in stupid wrinkles and folds upon him. His cheap felt hat, clapped upon his head by his mother with as little unconcern as an extinguisher upon a candle, was wrong end foremost, so that the bow of the band came upon the right hand side. His hands were huge and white, and lay open and palm upward at his side, the fingers inertly lax, like those of a discarded glove, and his face——

When I looked at the face of him I know not what insane desire, born of an unconquerable disgust, came up in me to rush upon him and club him down to the pavement with my stick and batter in that face—that face of a blind idiot—and blot it out from the sight of the sun for good and all. It was impossible to feel pity for the wretch. I

hated him because he was blind and an idiot. His eyes were filmy, like those of a fish, and he never blinked them. His mouth hung open.

Blind and an idiot, absolute stagnation, life as unconscious as that of the jelly-fish, an excrescence, a parasitic fungus in the form of a man, a creature far below the brute. The last horror of the business was that he never moved; he sat there just as his mother had placed him, his motionless, filmy eyes fixed, his jaw dropped, his hands open at his sides, his hat on wrong side foremost. He would sit like that, I knew, for hours—for days, perhaps—would, if left to himself, die of starvation, without raising a finger. What was going on inside of that misshapen head—behind those fixed eyes?

I had remembered the case by now. One of the students had told me of it. His mother brought him to the clinic occasionally, so that the lecturer might experiment upon his brain, stimulating it with electricity. "Heredity," the student had commented, "father a degenerate, exhausted race, drank himself into a sanitarium."

While I was thinking all this the mother of the boy had gone on talking, her thin voice vibrant with complaining and vituperation. But indeed I

could bear with it no longer, and went away. I left them behind me in the deserted, darkening street, the querulous, nagging woman and her blind, idiotic boy, and the last impression I have of the scene was her shrill voice ringing after me the oft-repeated words:

"Ah, the dirty beasts of doctors—they robs us and impose on us and tell us lies because we're poor!"

* * * * * *

The second Little Drama was wrought out for me the next day. I was sitting in the bay window of the club watching the world go by, when my eye was caught by a little group on the curbstone directly opposite. An old woman, meanly dressed, and two little children, both girls, the eldest about ten, the youngest, say, six or seven. They had been coming slowly along, and the old woman had been leading the youngest child by the hand. Just as they came opposite to where I was sitting the younger child lurched away from the woman once or twice, dragging limply at her hand, then its knees wobbled and bent and the next moment it had collapsed upon the pavement. Some children will do this from sheer perversity and with intent to be carried. But it was not perversity on this child's

part. The poor old woman hauled the little girl up to her feet, but she collapsed again at once after a couple of steps and sat helplessly down upon the sidewalk, staring vaguely about, her thumb in her mouth. There was something wrong with the little child—one could see that at half a glance. Some complaint, some disease of the muscles, some weakness of the joints, that smote upon her like this at inopportune moments. Again and again her old mother, with very painful exertion—she was old and weak herself—raised her to her feet, only that she might sink in a heap before she had moved a yard. The old woman's bonnet fell off —a wretched, battered black bonnet, and the other little girl picked it up and held it while she looked on at her mother's efforts with an indifference that could only have been born of familiarity. Twice the old woman tried to carry the little girl, but her strength was not equal to it; indeed, the effort of raising the heavy child to its feet was exhausting her. She looked helplessly at the street cars as they passed, but you could see she had not enough money to pay even three fares. Once more she set her little girl upon her feet, and helped her forward half a dozen steps. And so, little by little, with many pauses for rest and breath, the little

group went down the street and passed out of view, the little child staggering and falling as if from drunkenness, her sister looking on gravely, holding the mother's battered bonnet, and the mother herself, patient, half-exhausted, her grey hair blowing about her face, labouring on step by step, trying to appear indifferent to the crowd that passed by on either side, trying bravely to make light of the whole matter until she should reach home. As I watched them I thought of this woman's husband, the father of this paralytic little girl, and somehow it was brought to me that none of them would ever see him again, but that he was alive for all that.

* * * * * *

The third Little Drama was lively, and there was action in it, and speech, and a curious, baffling mystery. On a corner near a certain bank in this city there is affixed to the lamp post a call-box that the police use to ring up for the patrol wagon. When an arrest is made in the neighbourhood the offender is brought here, the wagon called for, and he is conveyed to the City Prison. On the afternoon of the day of the second Little Drama, as I came near to this corner, I was aware of a crowd gathered about the lamp post that held the call-box, and between the people's heads and over their

shoulders I could see the blue helmets of a couple of officers. I stopped and pushed up into the inner circle of the crowd. The two officers had in custody a young fellow of some eighteen or nineteen years. And I was surprised to find that he was as well dressed and as fine looking a lad as one would wish to see. I did not know what the charge was, I don't know it now,—but the boy did not seem capable of any great meanness. As I got into the midst of the crowd, and while I was noting what was going forward, it struck me that the people about me were unusually silent—silent as people are who are interested and unusually observant. Then I saw why. The young fellow's mother was there, and the Little Drama was enacting itself between her, her son, and the officers who had him in charge. One of these latter had the key to the call-box in his hand. He had not yet rung for the wagon. An altercation was going on between the mother and the son—she entreating him to come home, he steadily refusing.

"It's up to you," said one of the officers, at length; "if you don't go home with your mother, I'll call the wagon."

"No!"

"Jimmy!" said the woman, and then, coming

close to him, she spoke to him in a low voice and with an earnestness, an intensity, that it hurt one to see.

"No!"

"For the last time, will you come?"

"No! No! No!"

The officer faced about and put the key into the box, but the woman caught at his wrist and drew it away. It was a veritable situation. It should have occurred behind footlights and in the midst of painted flats and flies, but instead the city thundered about it, drays and cars went up and down in the street, and the people on the opposite walk passed with but an instant's glance. The crowd was as still as an audience, watching what next would happen. The crisis of the Little Drama had arrived.

"For the last time, will you come with me?"

"No!"

She let fall her hand then and turned and went away, crying into her handkerchief. The officer unlocked and opened the box, set the indicator and opened the switch. A few moments later, as I went on up the street, I met the patrol-wagon coming up on a gallop.

What was the trouble here? Why had that

young fellow preferred going to prison rather than home with his mother? What was behind it all I shall never know. It was a mystery—a little eddy in the tide of the city's life, come and gone in an instant, yet reaching down to the very depths of those things that are not meant to be seen.

And as I went along I wondered where was the father of that young fellow who was to spend his first night in jail, and the father of the little paralytic girl, and the father of the blind idiot, and it seemed to me that the chief actors in these three Little Dramas of the Curbstone had been somehow left out of the programme.

Shorty Stack, Pugilist

Shorty Stack, Pugilist

OVER at the "Big Dipper" mine a chuck-tender named Kelly had been in error as regards a box of dynamite sticks, and Iowa Hill had elected to give an "entertainment" for the benefit of his family.

The programme, as announced upon the posters that were stuck up in the Post Office and on the door of the Odd Fellows' Hall, was quite an affair. The Iowa Hill orchestra would perform, the livery-stable keeper would play the overture to "William Tell" upon his harmonica, and the town doctor would read a paper on "Tuberculosis in Cattle." The evening was to close with a "grand ball."

Then it was discovered that a professional pugilist from the "Bay" was over in Forest Hill, and someone suggested that a match could be made between him and Shorty Stack "to enliven the entertainment." Shorty Stack was a bedrock cleaner at the "Big Dipper," and handy with his

fists. It was his boast that no man of his weight (Shorty fought at a hundred and forty) no man of his weight in Placer County could stand up to him for ten rounds, and Shorty had always made good this boast. Shorty knew two punches, and no more—a short-arm jab under the ribs with his right, and a left upper-cut on the point of the chin.

The pugilist's name was McCleaverty. He was an out and out dub—one of the kind who appear in four-round exhibition bouts to keep the audience amused while the "event of the evening" is preparing—but he had had ring experience, and his name had been in the sporting paragraphs of the San Francisco papers. The dub was a welter-weight and a professional, but he accepted the challenge of Shorty Stack's backers and covered their bet of fifty dollars that he could not "stop" Shorty in four rounds.

And so it came about that extra posters were affixed to the door of the Odd Fellows' Hall and the walls of the Post Office to the effect that Shorty Stack, the champion of Placer County, and Buck McCleaverty, the Pride of Colusa, would appear in a genteel boxing exhibition at the entertainment given for the benefit, etc., etc.

Shorty had two weeks in which to train. The

nature of his work in the mine had kept his muscles hard enough, so his training was largely a matter of dieting and boxing an imaginary foe with a rock in each fist. He was so vigorous in his exercise and in the matter of what he ate and drank that the day before the entertainment he had got himself down to a razor-edge, and was in a fair way of going fine. When a man gets into too good condition, the least little slip will spoil him. Shorty knew this well enough, and told himself in consequence that he must be very careful.

The night before the entertainment Shorty went to call on Miss Starbird. Miss Starbird was one of the cooks at the mine. She was a very pretty girl, just turned twenty, and lived with her folks in a cabin near the superintendent's office, on the road from the mine to Iowa Hill. Her father was a shift boss in the mine, and her mother did the washing for the "office." Shorty was recognised by the mine as her "young man." She was going to the entertainment with her people, and promised Shorty the first "walk-around" in the "Grand Ball" that was to follow immediately after the Genteel Glove Contest.

Shorty came into the Starbird cabin on that particular night, his hair neatly plastered in a beauti-

ful curve over his left temple, and his pants outside of his boots as a mark of esteem. He wore no collar, but he had encased himself in a boiled shirt, which could mean nothing else but mute and passionate love, and moreover, as a crowning tribute, he refrained from spitting.

"How do you feel, Shorty?" asked Miss Starbird.

Shorty had always sedulously read the interviews with pugilists that appeared in the San Francisco papers immediately before their fights and knew how to answer.

"I feel fit to fight the fight of my life," he alliterated proudly. "I've trained faithfully and I mean to win."

"It ain't a regular prize fight, is it, Shorty?" she enquired. "Pa said he wouldn't take ma an' me if it was. All the women folk in the camp are going, an' I never heard of women at a fight, it ain't genteel."

"Well, I d'n know," answered Shorty, swallowing his saliva. "The committee that got the programme up called it a genteel boxing exhibition so's to get the women folks to stay. I call it a four round go with a decision."

"My, itull be exciting!" exclaimed Miss Star-

bird. "I ain't never seen anything like it. Oh, Shorty, d'ye think you'll win?"

"I don't *think* nothun about it. I *know* I will," returned Shorty, defiantly. "If I once get in my left upper cut on him, *huh!*" and he snorted magnificently.

Shorty stayed and talked to Miss Starbird until ten o'clock, then he rose to go.

"I gotta get to bed," he said, "I'm in training you see."

"Oh, wait a minute," said Miss Starbird, "I been making some potato salad for the private dining of the office, you better have some; it's the best I ever made."

"No, no," said Shorty, stoutly, "I don't want any."

"Hoh," sniffed Miss Starbird airily, "you don't need to have any."

"Well, don't you see," said Shorty, "I'm in training. I don't dare eat any of that kinda stuff."

"Stuff!" exclaimed Miss Starbird, her chin in the air. "No one *else* ever called my cooking stuff."

"Well, don't you see, don't you see."

"No, I don't see. I guess you must be 'fraid

of getting whipped if you're so 'fraid of a little salad."

"What!" exclaimed Shorty, indignantly. "Why I could come into the ring from a jag and whip him; 'fraid! *who's* afraid. I'll show you if I'm afraid. Let's have your potato salad, an' some beer, too. Huh! *I'll* show you if I'm afraid."

But Miss Starbird would not immediately consent to be appeased.

"No, you called it stuff," she said, "an' the superintendent said I was the best cook in Placer County."

But at last, as a great favour to Shorty, she relented and brought the potato salad from the kitchen and two bottles of beer.

When the town doctor had finished his paper on "Tuberculosis in Cattle," the chairman of the entertainment committee ducked under the ropes of the ring and announced that: "The next would be the event of the evening and would the gentlemen please stop smoking." He went on to explain that the ladies present might remain without fear and without reproach as the participants in the contest would appear in gymnasium tights, and would box with gloves and not with bare knuckles.

"Well, don't they always fight with gloves?" called a voice from the rear of the house. But the chairman ignored the interruption.

The "entertainment" was held in the Odd Fellows' Hall. Shorty's seconds prepared him for the fight in a back room of the saloon, on the other side of the street, and towards ten o'clock one of the committeemen came running in to say:

"What's the matter? Hurry up, you fellows, McCleaverty's in the ring already, and the crowd's beginning to stamp."

Shorty rose and slipped into an overcoat.

"All ready," he said.

"Now mind, Shorty," said Billy Hicks, as he gathered up the sponges, fans and towels, "don't mix things with him, you don't have to knock him out, all you want's the decision."

Next, Shorty was aware that he was sitting in a corner of the ring with his back against the ropes, and that diagonally opposite was a huge red man with a shaven head. There was a noisy, murmuring crowd somewhere below him, and there was a glare of kerosene lights over his head.

"Buck McCleaverty, the Pride of Colusa," announced the master of ceremonies, standing in the middle of the ring, one hand under the dub's

elbow. There was a ripple of applause. Then the master of ceremonies came over to Shorty's corner, and, taking him by the arm, conducted him into the middle of the ring.

"Shorty Stack, the Champion of Placer County." The house roared; Shorty ducked and grinned and returned to his corner. He was nervous, excited. He had not imagined it would be exactly like this. There was a strangeness about it all; an unfamiliarity that made him uneasy.

"Take it slow," said Billy Hicks, kneading the gloves, so as to work the padding away from the knuckles. The gloves were laced on Shorty's hands.

"Up you go," said Billy Hicks, again. "No, not the fight yet, shake hands first. Don't get rattled."

Then ensued a vague interval, that seemed to Shorty interminable. He had a notion that he shook hands with McCleaverty, and that some one asked him if he would agree to hit with one arm free in the breakaway. He remembered a glare of lights, a dim vision of rows of waiting faces, a great murmuring noise, and he had a momentary glimpse of someone he believed to be the referee, a young man in shirtsleeves and turned-up trousers. Then everybody seemed to be getting

out of the ring and away from him, even Billy Hicks left him after saying something he did not understand. Only the referee, McCleaverty and himself were left inside the ropes.

"Time!"

Somebody, that seemed to Shorty strangely like himself, stepped briskly out into the middle of the ring, his left arm before him, his right fist clinched over his breast. The crowd, the glaring lights, the murmuring noise, all faded away. There only remained the creaking of rubber soles over the resin of the boards of the ring and the sight of McCleaverty's shifting, twinkling eyes and his round, close-cropped head.

"Break!"

The referee stepped between the two men and Shorty realised that the two had clinched, and that his right forearm had been across McCleaverty's throat, his left clasping him about the shoulders.

What! Were they fighting already? This was the first round, of course, somebody was shouting.

"That's the stuff, Shorty."

All at once Shorty saw the flash of a red muscled arm, he threw forward his shoulder ducking his head behind it, the arm slid over the raised

shoulder and a bare and unprotected flank turned towards him.

"Now," thought Shorty. His arm shortened and leaped forward. There was a sudden impact. The shock of it jarred Shorty himself, and he heard McCleaverty grunt. There came a roar from the house.

"Give it to him, Shorty."

Shorty pushed his man from him, the heel of his glove upon his face. He was no longer nervous. The lights didn't bother him.

"I'll knock him out yet," he muttered to himself.

They fiddled and feinted about the ring, watching each other's eyes. Shorty held his right ready. He told himself he would jab McCleaverty again on the same spot when next he gave him an opening.

"Break!"

They must have clinched again, but Shorty was not conscious of it. A sharp pain in his upper lip made him angry. His right shot forward again, struck home, and while the crowd roared and the lights began to swim again, he knew that he was rushing McCleaverty back, back, back, his arms shooting out and in like piston rods, now for an upper cut with his left on the—

"Time!"

Billy Hicks was talking excitedly. The crowd still roared. His lips pained. Someone was spurting water over him, one of his seconds worked the fans like a windmill. He wondered what Miss Starbird thought of him now.

"Time!"

He barely had a chance to duck, almost double, while McCleaverty's right swished over his head. The dub was swinging for a knockout already. The round would be hot and fast.

"Stay with um, Shorty."

"That's the stuff, Shorty."

He must be setting the pace, the house plainly told him that. He stepped in again and cut loose with both fists.

"Break!"

Shorty had not clinched. Was it possible that McCleaverty was clinching "to avoid punishment." Shorty tried again, stepping in close, his right arm crooked and ready.

"Break!"

The dub was clinching. There could be no doubt of that. Shorty gathered himself together and rushed in, upper-cutting viciously; he felt McCleaverty giving way before him.

"He's got um going."

There was exhilaration in the shout. Shorty swung right and left, his fist struck something that hurt him. Sure, he thought, that must have been a good one. He recovered, throwing out his left before him. Where was the dub? not down there on one knee in a corner of the ring? The house was a pandemonium, near at hand some one was counting, "one—two—three—four—"

Billy Hicks shouted, "Come back to your corner. When he's up go right in to finish him. He ain't knocked out yet. He's just taking his full time. Swing for his chin again, you got him going. If you can put him out, Shorty, we'll take you to San Francisco."

"Seven—eight—nine—"

McCleaverty was up again. Shorty rushed in. Something caught him a fearful jar in the pit of the stomach. He was sick in an instant, racked with nausea. The lights began to dance.

"Time!"

There was water on his face and body again, deliciously cool. The fan windmills swung round and round. "What's the matter, what's the matter," Billy Hicks was asking anxiously.

Something was wrong. There was a lead-like

weight in Shorty's stomach, a taste of potato salad came to his mouth, he was sick almost to vomiting.

"He caught you a hard one in the wind just before the gong, did he?" said Billy Hicks. "There's fight in him yet. He's got a straight arm body blow you want to look out for. Don't let up on him. Keep—"

"Time!"

Shorty came up bravely. In his stomach there was a pain that made it torture to stand erect. Nevertheless he rushed, lashing out right and left. He was dizzy; before he knew it he was beating the air. Suddenly his chin jolted backward, and the lights began to spin; he was tiring rapidly, too, and with every second his arms grew heavier and heavier and his knees began to tremble more and more. McCleaverty gave him no rest. Shorty tried to clinch, but the dub sidestepped, and came in twice with a hard right and left over the heart. Shorty's gloves seemed made of iron; he found time to mutter, "If I only hadn't eaten that stuff last night."

What with the nausea and the pain, he was hard put to it to keep from groaning. It was the dub who was rushing now; Shorty felt he could not

support the weight of his own arms another instant. What was that on his face that was warm and tickled? He knew that he had just strength enough left for one more good blow; if he could only upper-cut squarely on McCleaverty's chin it might suffice.

"Break!"

The referee thrust himself between them, but instantly McCleaverty closed again. Would the round *never* end? The dub swung again, missed, and Shorty saw his chance; he stepped in, upper-cutting with all the strength he could summon up. The lights swam again, and the roar of the crowd dwindled to a couple of voices. He smelt whisky.

"Gimme that sponge." It was Billy Hicks voice. "He'll do all right now."

Shorty suddenly realised that he was lying on his back. In another second he would be counted out. He raised himself, but his hands touched a bed quilt and not the resined floor of the ring. He looked around him and saw that he was in the back room of the saloon where he had dressed. The fight was over.

"Did I win?" he asked, getting on his feet.

"Win!" exclaimed Billy Hicks. "You were knocked out. He put you out after you had him

beaten. Oh, you're a peach of a fighter, you are!"

* * * * * *

Half an hour later when he had dressed, Shorty went over to the Hall. His lip was badly swollen and his chin had a funny shape, but otherwise he was fairly presentable. The Iowa Hill orchestra had just struck into the march for the walk around. He pushed through the crowd of men around the door looking for Miss Starbird. Just after he had passed he heard a remark and the laugh that followed it:

"Quitter, oh, what a quitter!"

Shorty turned fiercely about and would have answered, but just at that moment he caught sight of Miss Starbird. She had just joined the promenade or the walk around with some other man. He went up to her:

"Didn't you promise to have this walk around with me?" he said aggrievedly.

"Well, did you think I was going to wait all night for you?" returned Miss Starbird.

As she turned from him and joined the march Shorty's eye fell upon her partner.

It was McCleaverty.

The Strangest Thing

The Strangest Thing

THE best days in the voyage from the Cape to Southampton are those that come immediately before and immediately after that upon which you cross the line, when the ship is as steady as a billiard table, and the ocean is as smooth and shiny and coloured as the mosaic floor of a basilica church, when the deck is covered with awning from stem to stern, and the resin bubbles out of the masts, and the thermometer in the companion-way at the entrance to the dining-saloon climbs higher and higher with every turn of the screw. Of course all the men people aboard must sleep on deck these nights. There is a pleasure in this that you will find nowhere else. At six your steward wakes you up with your morning cup of coffee, and you sit cross-legged in your pajamas on the skylight and drink your coffee and smoke your cigarettes and watch the sun shooting up over the rim of that polished basilica floor, and take pleas-

ure in the mere fact of your existence, and talk and talk and tell stories until it's time for bath and breakfast.

We came back from the Cape in *The Moor*, with a very abbreviated cabin list. Only three of the smaller tables in the saloon were occupied, and those mostly by men—diamond-brokers from Kimberly, gold-brokers from the Rand, the manager of a war correspondent on a lecture tour, cut short by the Ashanti war, an English captain of twenty-two, who had been with Jameson at Krugersdorp and somehow managed to escape, an Australian reporter named Miller, and two or three others of a less distinct personality.

Miller told the story that follows early one morning, sitting on the Bull board, tailor-fashion, and smoking pipefuls of straight perique, black as a nigger's wool. We were grouped around him on the deck in pajamas and bath robes. It was half after six, the thermometer was at 70 degrees, *The Moor* cut the still water with a soothing rumble of her screw, and at intervals flushed whole schools of flying fish. Somehow the talk had drifted to the inexplicable things that we had seen, and we had been piecing out our experiences with some really beautiful lies. Captain Thatcher, the Kru-

gersdorp chap, held that the failure of the Jameson Raid was the most inexplicable thing he had ever experienced, but none of the rest of us could think of anything we had seen or heard of that did not have some stealthy, shadowy sort of explanation sneaking after it and hunting it down.

"Well, I saw something a bit thick once," observed Miller, pushing down the tobacco in his pipe bowl with the tip of a callous finger, and in the abrupt silence that followed we heard the noise of dishes from the direction of the galley.

"It was in Johannesburg three years back, when I was down on me luck. I had been rooked properly by a Welsh gaming chap who was no end of a bounder, and three quid was all that stood between me and—well," he broke in, suddenly, "I had three quid left. I wore down me feet walking the streets of that bally town looking for anything that would keep me going for a while, and give me a chance to look around and fetch breath, and there was nothing, but I tell ye nothing, and I was fair desperate. One dye, and a filthy wet dye it was, too, I had gone out to the race track, beyond Hospital Hill, where the pony races are run, thinking as might be I'd find a berth, handling ponies there, but the season was too far gone,

and they turned me awye. I came back to town by another road—then by the waye that fetches around by the Mahomedan burying-ground. Well, the pauper burying-ground used to be alongside in those dyes, and as I came up, jolly well blown, I tell ye, for I'd but tightened me belt by wye of breakfast, I saw a chap diggin' a gryve. I was in a mind for gryves meself just then, so I pulled up and leaned over the fence and piped him off at his work. Then, like the geeser I'd come to be, I says:

"'What are ye doing there, friend?' He looked me over between shovelfuls a bit, and then says:

"'Oh, just setting out early violets;' and that shut me up properly.

"Well, I piped him digging that gryve for perhaps five minutes, and then, s' help me, I asked him for a job. I did—I asked that gryve-digger for a job—I was that low. He leans his back against the side of the gryve and looks me over, then by and bye, says he:

"'All right, pardner!'

"'I'm thinking your from the Stytes,' says I.

"'Guess yes,' he says, and goes on digging.

"Well, we came to terms after a while. He was

to give me two bob a dye for helping him at his work, and I was to have a bunk in his 'shack', as he called it—a box of a house built of four boards, as I might sye, that stood just on the edge of the gryveyard. He was a rum 'un, was that Yankee chap. Over pipes that night he told me something of himself, and do y' know, that gryve-digger in the pauper burying-ground in Johannesburg, South Africa, was a Harvard graduate! Strike me straight if I don't believe he really was. The man was a wreck from strong drink, but that was the one thing he was proud of.

"'Yes, sir,' he'd say, over and over again, looking straight ahead of him, 'Yes, sir, I was a Harvard man once, and pulled at number five in the boat'—the 'varsity boat, mind ye; and then he'd go on talking half to himself. 'And now what am I? I'm digging gryves for hire—burying dead people for a living, when I ought to be dead meself. I am dead and buried long ago. It's just the whiskey that keeps me alive, Miller,' he would say; 'when I stop that I'm done for.'

"The first morning I came round for work I met him dressed as if to go to town, and carrying a wickered demijohn. 'Miller,' he says, 'I'm going into town to get this filled. You must stop here

and be ready to answer any telephone call from the police station.' S' help me if there wasn't a telephone in that beastly shack. 'If a pauper cops off they'll ring you up from town and notify you to have the gryve ready. If I'm awye, you'll have to dig it. Remember, if it's a man, you must dig a six foot six hole; if it's a woman, five feet will do, and if it's a kid, three an' half'll be a plenty. S'long.' And off he goes.

"Strike me blind but that was a long dye, that first one. I'd the pauper gryves for view and me own thoughts for company. But along about noon, the Harvard graduate not showing up, I found a diversion. The graduate had started to paint the shack at one time, but had given over after finishing one side, but the paint pot and the brushes were there. I got hold of 'em and mixed a bit o' paint and went the rounds of the gryves. Ye know how it is in a pauper burying-ground—no nymes at all on the headboards—naught but numbers, and half o' them washed awye by the rynes; so I, for a diversion, as I sye, started in to paint all manner o' fancy nymes and epitaphs on the headboards—any nyme that struck me fancy, and then underneath, an appropriate epitaph, and the dytes, of course—I didn't forget the dytes.

Ye know, that was the rarest enjoyment I ever had. Ye don't think so? Try it once! Why, Gawd blyme me, there's a chance for imagination in it, and genius and art—highest kind of art. For instance now, I'd squat down in front of a blank headboard and think a bit, and the inspiration would come, and I'd write like this, maybe: 'Jno. K. Boggart, of New Zealand. Born Dec. 21, 1870; died June 5, 1890,' and then, underneath, 'He Rests in Peace'; or else, 'Elsie, Youngest Daughter of Mary B. and William H. Terhune; b. May 1st, 1880; d. Nov. 25, 1889—Not Lost, but Gone Before'; or agyne, 'Lucas, Lieutenant T. V. Killed in Battle at Wady Halfa, Egypt, August 30, 1889; born London, England, Jan. 3, 1850—He Lies Like a Warrior, Tyking His Rest with His Martial Cloak Around Him'; or something humorous, as 'Bohunkus, J. J.; born Germany, Oct. 3d, 1880; died (by request) Cape Town, Sept. 4, 1890'; or one that I remember as my very best effort, that read, 'Willie, Beloved Son of Anna and Gustave Harris; b. April 1st, 1878; d. May 5th, 1888—He was a Man Before His Mother.' Then I wrote me own nyme, with the epitaph, 'More Sinned Against Than Sinning;' and the

Harvard chap's too. His motto, I remember, was 'He Pulled 5 in His 'Varsity's Boat.'

"Well, I had more sport that afternoon than I've ever had since. Y'know I felt as if I really were acquainted with all those people—with John Boggart, and Lieutenant Lucas, and Bohunkus, and Willie and all. Ah, that was a proper experience. But right in the middle of me work here comes a telephone message from town: 'Body of dead baby found at mouth of city sewer —prepare gryve at once.' Well, I dug that gryve, the first, last and only gryve I ever hope to dig. It came on to ryne like a water-spout, and oh, but it was jolly tough work. Then about four o'clock, just as I was finishing, the Harvard chap comes home, howling drunk. I see him go into the shack, and pretty soon out he comes, with a hoe in one hand and a table leg in the other. Soon as ever he sees me he makes a staggering run at me, swinging the hoe and the table leg and yelling like a Zulu indaba. Just to make everything agreeable and appropriate, I was down in the gryve, and it occurred to me that the situation was too uncommon convenient. I scrambled out and made a run for it, for there was murder in his eye, and for upwards of ten minutes we two played

blindman's buff in that gryveyard, me dodging from one headboard to another, and he at me heels, chivying me like a fox and with intent to kill. All at once he trips over a headboard, and goes down and can't get up, and at the same minute here comes the morgue wagon over Hospital Hill.

"Now here comes the queer part of this lamentable history. A trap was following that morgue wagon, a no-end swell trap, with a cob in the shafts that was worth an independent fortune. There was an old gent in the trap and a smart Cape boy driving. The old gent was the heaviest kind of a swell, but I'd never seen him before. The morgue wagon drives into the yard, and I—the Harvard chap being too far gone—points out the gryve. The driver of the morgue wagon chucks out the coffin, a bit of a three-foot box, and drives back to town. Then up comes the trap, and the old gent gets down—dressed up to the nines he was, in that heartbreaking ryne—and says he, 'My man, I would like to have that coffin opened.' By this time the Harvard chap had pulled himself together. He staggered up to the old gent and says, 'No, can't op'n no coffin, 'tsgainst all relugations—all regalutions, can't permit no coffin

tobeopp'n.' I wish you would have seen the old gent. Excited! The man was shaking like a flagstaff in a gyle, talked thick and stammered, he was so phased. Gawd strike me, what a scene! I can see it now—that pauper burying ground wye down there in South Africa—no trees, all open and bleak. The pelting ryne, the open gryve and the drunken Harvard chap, and the excited old swell arguing over a baby's coffin.

Pretty soon the old gent brings up a sovereign and gives it to the Harvard chap.

" 'Let her go,' says he then, and with that he gives the top board of the coffin such a kick as started it an inch or more. With that—now listen to what I'm telling—with that the old gent goes down on his knees in the mud and muck, and kneels there waiting and fair gasping with excitement while the Harvard chap wrenches off the topboard. Before he had raised it four inches me old gent plunges his hand in quick, gropes there a second and takes out something—something shut in the palm of his hand.

" 'That's all,' says he: 'Thank you, my man,' and gives us a quid apiece. We stood there like stuck swine, dotty with the queerness, the horribleness of the thing.

"'That's all,' he says again, with a long breath of relief, as he climbs into his trap with his clothes all foul with mud. 'That's all, thank Gawd.' Then to the Cape boy: 'Drive her home, Jim.' Five minutes later we lost him in the blur of the rain over Hospital Hill."

"But what was it he took out of the baby's coffin?" said half a dozen men in a breath at this point. "What was it? What could it have been?"

"Ah, what was it?' said Miller. "I'll be damned if I know what it was. I never knew, I never will know."

A Reversion to Type

A Reversion to Type

SCHUSTER was too damned cheeky. He was the floor-walker in a department store on Kearny street, and I had opportunity to observe his cheek upon each of the few occasions on which I went into that store with—let us say my cousin. A floor-walker should let his communications be "first aisle left," or "elevator, second floor front," or "third counter right," for whatsoever is more than this cometh of evil. But Schuster used to come up to—my cousin, and take her gently by the hand and ask her how she did, and if she was to be out of town much that season, and tell her, with mild reproach in his eye, that she had been quite a stranger of late, while I stood in the background mumbling curses not loud but deep.

However, my cousin does not figure in this yarn, nor myself. Paul Schuster is the hero—Paul Schuster, floor-walker in a department-store that sold ribbons and lace and corsets and other things, fancy, now! He was hopelessly commonplace, lived with a maiden aunt and a parrot in two

rooms, way out in the bleak streets around Lone Mountain. When on duty he wore a long black cutaway coat, a white pique four-in-hand and blue-grey "pants" that cost four dollars. Besides this he parted his hair on the side and entertained ideas on culture and refinement. His father had been a barber in the Palace Hotel barber shop.

Paul Schuster had never heard anything of a grandfather.

Schuster came to that department-store when he was about thirty. Five years passed; then ten —he was there yet—forty years old by now. Always in a black cutaway and white tie, always with his hair parted on one side, always with the same damned cheek. A floor-walker, respectable as an English barrister, steady as an eight-day clock, a figure known to every woman in San Francisco. He had lived a floor-walker; as a floor-walker he would die. Such he was at forty. At forty-one he fell. Two days and all was over.

It sometimes happens that a man will live a sober, steady, respectable, commonplace life for forty, fifty or even sixty years, and then, without the least sign of warning, suddenly go counter to every habit, to every trait of character and every rule of conduct he has been believed to possess.

The thing only happens to intensely respectable gentlemen, of domestic tastes and narrow horizons, who are just preparing to become old. Perhaps it is a last revolt of a restrained youth—the final protest of vigorous, heady blood, too long dammed up. This bolting season does not last very long. It comes upon a man between the ages of forty and fifty-five, and while it lasts the man should be watched more closely than a young fellow in his sophomore year at college. The vagaries of a sophomore need not be taken any more seriously than the skittishness of a colt, but when a fifty-year-old bolts, stand clear!

On the second of May—two months and a day after his forty-first birthday—Paul Schuster bolted. It came upon him with the quickness of a cataclysm, like the sudden, abrupt development of latent mania. For a week he had been feeling ill at ease—restless; a vague discomfort hedged him in like an ill-fitting garment; he felt the moving of his blood in his wrists and his temples. A subtle desire to do something, he knew not what, bit and nibbled at his brain like the tooth of a tiny unfamiliar rodent.

On the second of May, at twenty minutes after six, Schuster came out of the store at the

tail end of the little army of home-bound clerks. He locked the door behind him, according to custom, and stood for a moment on the asphalt, his hands in his pockets, fumbling his month's pay. Then he said to himself, nodding his head resolutely:

"To-night I shall get drunk—as drunk as I possibly can. I shall go to the most disreputable resorts I can find—I shall know the meaning of wine, of street fights, of women, of gaming, of jolly companions, of noisy mid-night suppers. I'll do the town, or by God, the town will do me. Nothing shall stop me, and I will stop at nothing. Here goes!"

Now, if Paul Schuster had only been himself this bolt of his would have brought him to nothing worse than the Police Court, and would have lasted but twenty-four hours at the outside. But Schuster, like all the rest of us, was not merely himself. He was his ancestors as well. In him as in you and me, were generations—countless generations—of forefathers. Schuster had in him the characteristics of his father, the Palace Hotel barber, but also, he had the unknown characteristics of his grandfather, of whom he had never heard, and his great-grandfather, likewise ignored. It

is rather a serious matter to thrust yourself under the dominion of unknown, unknowable impulses and passions. This is what Schuster did that night. Getting drunk was an impulse belonging to himself; but who knows what "inherited tendencies," until then dormant, the alcohol unleashed within him? Something like this must have happened to have accounted for what follows.

Schuster went straight to the Palace Hotel bar, where he had cocktails, thence to the Poodle Dog, where he had a French dinner and champagne, thence to the Barbary Coast on upper Kearny street, and drank whiskey that rasped his throat like gulps of carpet tacks. Then, realising that San Francisco was his own principality and its inhabitants his vassals, he hired a carriage and drove to the Cliff House, and poured champagne into the piano in the public parlor. A waiter remonstrated, and Paul Schuster, floor-walker and respectable citizen, bowled him down with a catsup bottle and stamped upon his abdomen. At the beginning of that evening he belonged to that class whom policemen are paid to protect. When he walked out of the Cliff House he was a freebooter seven feet tall, with a chest expansion of fifty inches. He paid the hack-driver a double

fare and strode away into the night and plunged into the waste of sand dunes that stretch back from the beach on the other side of the Park.

It never could be found out what happened to Schuster, or what he did, during the next ten hours. We pick him up again in a saloon on the waterfront about noon the next day, with thirty dollars in his pocket and God knows what disorderly notions in his crazed wits. At this time he was sober as far as the alcohol went. It might be supposed that now would have been the time for reflection and repentance and return to home and respectability. Return home! Not much! Schuster had began to wonder what kind of an ass he had been to have walked the floor of a department-store for the last score of years. Something was boiling in his veins. B-r-r-r! Let 'em all stand far from him now.

That day he left San Francisco and rode the blind baggage as far as Colfax on the Overland. He chose Colfax because he saw the name chalked on a freight car at the Oakland mole. At Colfax, within three hours after his arrival, he fought with a restaurant man over the question of a broken saucer, and the same evening was told to leave the town by the sheriff.

Out of Colfax, some twenty-eight miles into the mountains, are placer gold mines, having for headquarters a one-street town called Iowa Hill. Schuster went over to the Hill the same day on the stage. The stage got in at night and pulled up in front of the postoffice. Schuster went into the postoffice, which was also a Wells-Fargo office, a candy store, a drug store, a cigar store, and a lounging-room, and asked about hotels.

Only the postmaster was in at that time, but as Schuster leaned across the counter, talking to him, a young man came in, with a huge spur on his left boot-heel. He and the postmaster nodded, and the young man slid an oblong object about the size of a brick across the counter. The object was wrapped in newspaper and seemed altogether too heavy for anything but metal—metal of the precious kind, for example.

"He?" answered the postmaster to Schuster, when the young man had gone. "He's the superintendent of the Little Bear mine on the other side of the American River, about three miles by the trail."

For the next week Schuster set himself to work to solve the problem of how a man might obtain a shotgun in the vicinity of Iowa Hill without the

fact being remembered afterward and the man identified. It seemed good to him after a while to steal the gun from a couple of Chinamen who were washing gravel along the banks of the American River about two miles below the Little Bear. For two days he lay in the tarweed and witch hazel, on the side of the canyon overlooking the cabin, noted the time when both Chinamen were sufficiently far away, and stole the gun, together with a saw and a handful of cartridges loaded with buckshot. Within the next week he sawed off the gun-barrels sufficiently short, experimented once or twice with the buckshot, and found occasion to reconnoiter every step of the trail that led from the Little Bear to Iowa Hill. Also, he found out at the bar of the hotel at the Hill that the superintendent of the Little Bear amalgamated and reported the cleanup on Sundays. When he had made sure of this Schuster was seen no more about that little one-street mining town.

"He says it's Sunday," said Paul Schuster to himself; "but that's why it's probably Saturday or Monday. He ain't going to have the town know when he brings the brick over. It might even be Friday. I'll make it a four-night watch."

There is a nasty bit on the trail from the Little

Bear to the Hill, steep as a staircase, narrow as a rabbit-run, and overhung with manzanita. The place is trumpet-mouthed in shape, and sound carries far. So, on the second night of his watch, Schuster could at last plainly hear the certain sounds that he had been waiting for—sounds that jarred sharply on the prolonged roll of the Morning Star stamps, a quarter of a mile beyond the canyon. The sounds were those of a horse threshing through the gravel and shallow water of the ford in the river just below. He heard the horse grunt as he took the slope of the nearer bank, and the voice of his rider speaking to him came distinctly to his ears. Then silence for one—two—three minutes, while the stamp mill at the Morning Star purred and rumbled unceasingly and Schuster's heart pumped thickly in his throat. Then a blackness blacker than that of the night heaved suddenly against the grey of the sky, close in upon him, and a pebble clicked beneath a shod hoof.

"Pull up!" Schuster was in the midst of the trail, his cheek caressing the varnished stock.

"Whoa! Steady there! What in hell——"

"Pull up. You know what's wanted. Chuck us that brick."

The superintendent chirped sharply to the horse, spurring with his left heel.

"Stand clear there, God damn you! I'll ride you down!"

The stock leaped fiercely in Schuster's arm-pit, nearly knocking him down, and, in the light of two parallel flashes, he saw an instantaneous picture—rugged skyline, red-tinted manzanita bushes, the plunging mane and head of a horse, and above it a Face with open mouth and staring eyes, smoke-wreathed and hatless. The empty stirrup thrashed across Schuster's body as the horse scraped by him. The trail was dark in front of him. He could see nothing. But soon he heard a little bubbling noise and a hiccough. Then all fell quiet again.

"I got you, all right!"

Thus Schuster, the ex-floor-walker, whose part hitherto in his little life-drama had been to say, "first aisle left," "elevator, second floor," "first counter right."

Then he went down on his knees, groping at the warm bundle in front of him. But he found no brick. It had never occurred to him that the superintendent might ride over to town for other reasons than merely to ship the week's cleanup. He struck a light and looked more closely—looked

at the man he had shot. He could not tell whether it was the superintendent or not, for various reasons, but chiefly because the barrels of the gun had been sawn off, the gun loaded with buckshot, and both barrels fired simultaneously at close range.

Men coming over the trail from the Hill the next morning found the young superintendent, and spread the report of what had befallen him.

* * * * * *

When the Prodigal Son became hungry he came to himself. So it was with Schuster. Living on two slices of bacon per day (eaten raw for fear of kindling fires) is what might be called starving under difficulties, and within a week Schuster was remembering and longing for floor-walking and respectability. Within a month of his strange disappearance he was back in San Francisco again knocking at the door of his aunt's house on Geary street. A week later he was taken on again at his old store, in his old position, his unexcused absence being at length, and under protest, condoned by a remembrance of "long and faithful service."

Schuster picked up his old life again precisely where he had left it on the second of May, six weeks previously—picked it up and stayed by it,

calmly, steadily, uneventfully. The day before he died he told this story to his maiden aunt, who told it to me, with the remark that it was, of course, an absurd lie. Perhaps it was.

One thing, however, remains to tell. I repeated the absurd lie to a friend of mine who is in the warden's office over at the prison of San Quentin. I mentioned Schuster's name.

"Schuster! Schuster!" he repeated; "why we had a Schuster over here once—a long time ago, though. An old fellow he was, and a bad egg, too. Commuted for life, though. Son was a barber at the Palace Hotel."

"What was old Schuster up for?" I asked.

"Highway robbery," said my friend.

"Boom"

"Boom"

SAN DIEGO in Southern California, is the largest city in the world. If your geographies and guide-books and encyclopædias have told you otherwise, they have lied, or their authors have never seen San Diego. Why, San Diego is nearly twenty-five miles from end to end! Why, San Diego has more miles of sidewalk, more leagues of street railways, more measureless lengths of paved streets, more interminable systems of sewer-piping, than has London or Paris or even—even—even Chicago (and I who say so was born in Chicago, too)! There are statelier houses in San Diego than in any other "of the world's great centres," more spacious avenues, more imposing business blocks, more delicious parks, more overpowering public buildings, the pavements are better laid, the electric lighting is more systematic, the railroad and transportation facilities more accommodating, the climate is better than the Riviera, the days are longer, the nights shorter, the men finer, the women prettier, the theatres more attractive, the restaurants cheaper, the wines more

sparkling, "business opportunities" lie in wait for the unfortunate at dark street-corners and fly at his throat till he must fain fight them off. Life is one long, glad fermentation. There is no darkness in San Diego, nor any more night.

Incidentally corner lots are desirable.

All of this must be so, because you may read it in the green and gold prospectus of the San Diego Land and Improvement Company (consolidated), sent free on application—that is, at one time during the boom it was sent free—but to-day the edition is out of print, and can only be seen in the collection of bibliophiles and wealthy amateurs, and the boom is only an echo now. But when the guests of the big Coronado Hotel over on the island come across to the main land and course jackrabbits with greyhounds in the country to the north of the town, their horses' hoofs, as they plunge through the sagebrush and tar weed, will sometimes slide and clatter upon a bit of concrete sidewalk, half sunk of its own weight into the sand; or the jack will be started in a low square of bricks, such as is built for frame house foundations, and which make excellent jumping for the horses. There is a colony of rattlers on the shores of a marsh to the southwest (the maps call it

Amethyst Lake) and the little half-breed Indians catch the tarantulas and horned toads that you buy alive in glass jars on the hotel veranda, near the postoffice site, and everything is very gay and pleasant and picturesque.

Why I remember it all so well is because I found Steele in this place. You see, Steele was a very good friend of mine though he was Oxon, and I only a man from Chicago. When his wife knew I was coming west she gave me Steele's address, and told me I was to look him up. Since she told me this with much insistence and reiteration and with tears in her voice, I made it a point to be particular. She had not heard from Steele in two years. The address she gave me was "Hon. Ralph Truax-Steele, Elmwood avenue and One Hundred and Eighty-eighth street, San Diego, California."

When I arrived at San Diego I found it would be advisable to hire a horse, for 188th street, instead of waiting for the Elmwood Avenue electric car, and when I asked for directions a red-headed man whose father was Irish and whose mother was Chinese, offered to act as guide for twenty dollars. He said, though, he would furnish his own outfit. I demurred and he went away. I was told that some eight miles out beyond the

range I would find a water-hole, and that if I held to the southwest after leaving this hole, keeping my horse's ears between the double peak of a distant mountain called Little Two Top, I would come after a while to a lamp-post with a tarantula's nest where the lamp should have been. It would be hard to miss this lamp-post, they told me, as the desert was very flat thereabouts, and the lamp-posts could be seen for a radius of ten miles. Also, there might be water there—the horse would smell it out if there was. Also, it was a good place to camp, because of a tiny ledge of shale outcropping there. I was to be particular about this lamp-post, because it stood at the corner of Elmwood avenue and 188th street.

When I asked about the Hon. Truax-Steele, Oxon, information was less explicit. They shook their heads. One of them seemed to recollect a "shack" about a mile hitherward of Two Top, a statement that was at once contradicted by someone else. Might have been an old Digger "wicky-up." Sometimes the Indians camped in the valley on their way to ghost dances and tribal feasts. It wasn't a place for a white man to live, chiefly because the climate offered so many advantages and attractions to horned toads, tarantulas and

rattlesnakes. Then the red-headed Chinese-Irishman came back and said, with an accent that was beyond all words, that a sheepherder had once told him of a loco-man out beyond McIntyre's waterhole, and another man said that, "Yes, that was so; he'd passed flasks with a loco-man out that way once last June, when he was out looking for a strayed pony. In fact, the loco-man lived out there, had a son, too, leastways a kid lived with him." This seemed encouraging. The Hon. Truax-Steele, Oxon, was accredited with a son—so his wife had said, who should know. So I started out, simultaneously hoping and dreading that the loco-man and the honourable Truax might be one flesh.

I left San Diego at four o'clock A. M. to avoid as much as possible the heat of mid-day, and just at sunset saw what might have been a cactus plant standing out stark and still on the white blur of sage and alkali like an exclamation point on a blank page. It was the lamp-post of the spider's nest that marked the intersection of Elmwood avenue and 188th street. And then my horse shied, with his hind legs only, in the way good horses have, and Ralph Truax-Steele rose out of a dried muck-hole under the bit.

I had expected a madman, but his surprise and pleasure at seeing me were perfectly sane. After awhile he said: "Sorry, old boy. It's the hospitality of the Arab I can give you; nothing better. A handful of dates (we call 'em caned prunes out here), the dried flesh of a kid (Californian for jerked beef), and a mouthful of cold water, which the same we will thicken with forty-rod rye; incidentally, coffee, black and unsweet, and tobacco, which at one time I should have requested my undergroom to discontinue."

We went to his "shack" (I observed it to be built of discarded bricks, mortared with 'dobe mud) and I was made acquainted with his boy, Carrington Truax-Steele, fitting for Oxford under tutelage of his father.

We had supper, after which the Hon. Truax, Sr. stood forth under the kindling glory of that desert twilight by that incongruous, reeling lamp-post, booted, bare-headed and woolen-shirted, and to the low swinging scimitar of the new welded moon declaimed Creon's speech to Oedipus in sonorous Greek. When he was done he exclaimed, abruptly: "Come along, I'll show you 'round."

I looked about that stricken reach of alkali, and followed him wondering. That evening the Hon.

Ralph Truax-Steele, Oxon, showed me his real estate and also, unwittingly, the disordered workings of his brain. The rest I guessed and afterwards confirmed.

Steele had gone mad over the real estate "boom" that had struck the town five years previously, when land was worth as many dollars as could cover it, and men and women fought with each other to buy lots around the water hole called Amethyst Lake. The "boom" had collapsed, and with it Steele's reason, for to him the boom was on the point of recommencing; sane enough on other points, in this direction the man's grip upon himself was gone for good.

"There," he said to me that evening as we crushed our way through the sagebrush, indicating a low roll on the desert surface, "there are my villa sites, here will run a driveway, and yonder where you see the skeleton of that steer I'm thinking of putting up a little rustic stone chapel."

"Ralph, Ralph," I said, "come out of this. Can't you see that the whole business is dead and done for long since? You're going back with me to God's country to-morrow—going back to your wife, you and the boy. She sent me to fetch you."

He stared at me wonderingly.

"Why, it's bound to come within a few days," he said. "Wait till next Wednesday, say, and you won't recognise this place. There'll be a rush here such as there was when Oklahoma was opened. We have everything for us—climate, temperature, water. Harry," he added in my ear, "look around you. You are standing on the site of one of the grandest, stateliest cities of civilisation."

That night the boy Carrington and I sat late in consultation while Steele slept. "Nothing but force will do it," said the lad. "I know him well, and I've tried it again and again. It's no use any other way." So force it was.

How we got Steele back to San Diego I may not tell. Carrington is the only other person who knows, and I'm sure he will say nothing. When Steele found himself in the heart of a real city and began to look about him, and take stock of his surroundings, the real collapse came. He is in a sanitarium now somewhere in Illinois, and his wife and son see him on Wednesday and Sunday afternoons from two till five. Steele will never come out of that sanitarium, though he now realises that his desert city was a myth, a creation of his own distorted wits. He's sound enough on that point, but a strange inversion has taken place. It is now upon all other subjects that he is insane.

The Dis-Associated Charities

The Dis-Associated Charities

THERE used to be a place in feudal Paris called the Court of Miracles, and Mister Victor Hugo has told us all about it. This Court was a quarter of the town where the beggars lived, and it was called "of the miracles", because once across its boundaries the blind saw, the lame walked and the poor cared not to have the gospel preached unto them.

San Francisco has its Court of Miracles too. It is a far cry thither, for it lies on the other side of Chinatown and Dagotown, and blocks beyond Luna's restaurant. It is in the valley between Telegraph Hill and Russian Hill, and you must pass through it as you go down to Meigg's Wharf where the Government tugs tie up.

One has elected to call it the Court of Miracles, but it is not a court, and the days of miracles are over. It is a row of seven two-story houses, one of them brick. The brick house is over a saloon

kept by a Kanaka woman and called "The Eiffel Tower." Here San Francisco's beggars live and have their being. That is, a good many of them.

The doubled-up old man with the white beard and neck-handkerchief who used to play upon a zither and the sympathies of the public on the corner of Sutter street has moved out, and one can find no trace of him, and Father Elphick, the white-headed vegetarian of Lotta's Fountain, is dead. But plenty of the others are left. The neatly dressed fellow with dark blue spectacles, who sings the *Marseillaise*, accompanying himself upon an infinitesimal hand organ, is here; Mrs. McCleaverty is here, and the old bare-headed man who sits on the street corner by the Bohemian Club, after six o'clock in the evening and turns the crank of a soundless organ, has here set up his everlasting rest.

The beggars of the Seven Houses are genuine miserables. Perhaps they have an organisation and a president, I don't know. But I do know that Leander and I came very near demoralising the whole lot of them.

More strictly speaking, it was Leander who did the deed, I merely looked on and laughed, but Leander says that by laughing I lent him my im-

moral support, and am therefore party to the act.

Leander and I had been dining at the "Red House," which is a wine-shop that Gelett Burgess discovered in an alley not far from the county jail. Leander and I had gone there because we like to sit at its whittled tables and drink its *Vin Ordinaire (très ordinaire)* out of tin gill measures; also we like its salad and its thick slices of bread that you eat after you have rubbed them with an onion or a bit of garlic. We always go there in evening dress in order to impress the Proletariat.

On this occasion after we had dined and had come out again into the gas and gaiety of the Mexican quarter we caromed suddenly against Cluness. Cluness is connected with some sort of a charitable institution that has a house somewhere in the "Quarter." He says that he likes to alleviate distress wherever he sees it; and that after all, the best thing in life is to make some poor fellow happy for a few moments.

Leander and I had nothing better to do that evening so we went around with Cluness, and watched him as he gave a month's rent to an infirm old lady on Stockton street, a bundle of magazines to a whining old rascal at the top of a nigger tenement, and some good advice to a Chinese girl who

didn't want to go to the Presbyterian Mission House.

"That's my motto," says he, as we came away from the Chinese girl, "alleviate misery wherever you see it and try and make some poor fellow happy for a few moments."

"Ah, yes," exclaimed this farceur Leander, sanctimoniously, while I stared, "that's the only thing worth while," and he sighed and wagged his head.

Cluness went on to tell us about a deserving case he had—we were going there next—in fact, innocently enough, he described the Seven Houses to us, never suspecting they were the beggar's headquarters. He said there was a poor old paralytic woman lived there, who had developed an appetite for creamed oysters.

"It's the only thing," said Cluness, "that she can keep on her stomach."

"She told you so?" asked Leander.

"Yes, yes."

"Well, she ought to know."

We arrived at the Seven Houses and Cluness paused before the tallest and dirtiest.

"Here's where she lives; I'm going up for a few moments."

"Have a drink first," suggested Leander, fixing his eyes upon the saloon under the brick house.

We three went in and sat down at one of the little round zinc tables—painted to imitate marble—and the Kanaka woman herself brought us our drinks. While we were drinking, one of the beggars came in. He was an Indian, totally blind, and in the day time played a mouth-organ on Grant Avenue near a fashionable department store.

"Tut, tut," said Cluness, "poor fellow, blind, you see, what a pity, I'll give him a quarter."

"No, let me," exclaimed Leander.

As he spoke the door opened again and another blind man groped in. This fellow I had seen often. He sold lavender in little envelopes on one of the corners of Kearny street. He was a stout, smooth-faced chap and always kept his chin in the air.

"What misery there is in this world," sighed Cluness as his eye fell upon this latter, "one half the world don't know how—"

"Look, they know each other," said Leander. The lavender man had groped his way to the Indian's table—evidently it was their especial table—and the two had fallen a-talking. They ordered a sandwich apiece and a small mug of beer.

"Let's do something for 'em," exclaimed Clu-

ness, with a burst of generosity. "Let's make 'em remember this night for years to come. Look at 'em trying to be happy over a bit of dry bread and a pint of flat beer. I'm going to give 'em a dollar each."

"No, no," protested Leander. "Let me fix it, I've more money than you. Let me do a little good now and then. You don't want to hog all the philanthropy, Cluness, *I'll* give 'em something."

"It would be very noble and generous of you, indeed," cried Cluness, "and you'll feel better for it, see if you don't. But I must go to my paralytic. You fellows wait for me. I'll be down in twenty minutes."

I frowned at Leander when Cluness was gone. "Now what tom-foolery is it this time?" said I.

"Tom-foolery," exclaimed Leander, blankly. "It's philanthropy. By Jove, here's another chap with his lamps blown out. Look at him."

A third unfortunate, blind as the other two, had just approached the Indian and the lavender man. The three were pals, one could see that at half a glance. No doubt they met at this table every night for beer and sandwiches. The last blind man was a Dutchman. I had seen him from time to time on Market street, with a cigar-box

tied to his waist and a bunch of pencils in his fist.

"Eins!" called the Dutchman to the Kanaka, as he sat down with the lavender man and the Indian. "Eins—mit a hem sendvidge."

"Excuse me," said Leander, coming up to their table.

What was it? Did those three beggars, their instinct trained by long practice, recognise the alms-giver in the sound of Leander's voice, or in the step. It is hard to say, but instantly each one of them dropped the mildly convivial and assumed the humbly solicitous air, turning his blind head towards Leander, listening intently. Leander took out his purse and made a great jingling with his money. Now, I knew that Leander had exactly fifteen dollars—no more, no less—fifteen dollars, in three five-dollar gold pieces—not a penny of change. Could it be possible that he was going to give a gold piece to the three beggars? It was, evidently, for I heard him say:

"Excuse me. I've often passed you fellows on the street, in town, and I guess I've always been too short of change, or in too much of a hurry to remember you. But I'm going to make up for it now, if you'll permit me. Here—" and he jingled his money, "here is a five dollar gold piece that

I'd like to have you spend between the three of you to-night, and drink my health, and—and—have a good time, you know. Catch on?"

They caught on.

"May God bless you, young man!" exclaimed the old lavender man.

The Indian grunted expressively.

The Dutchman twisted about in his place and shouted in the direction of the bar:

"Mek ut er bottle Billzner und er Gotha druffle, mit ein *im*-borted Frankfooter bei der side on."

The Kanaka woman came up, and the Dutchman repeated his order. The lavender man paused reflectively tapping his brow, then he delivered himself: "A half spring chicken," he said with profound gravity, "rather under done, and some chicory salad and a bottle of white wine—put the bottle in a little warm water for about two minutes —and some lyonnaise potatoes with onions, and—

"Donner wetter," shouted the Dutchman, "genuch!" smiting the table with his fist.

The other subsided. The Kanaka woman turned to the Indian.

"Whiskey," he grunted, "plenty whiskey, big beefsteak, soh," and he measured off a yard on the table.

"Leander," said I, when he rejoined me, "that was foolishness, you've thrown away your five dollars and these fellows are going to waste it in riotous living. You see the results of indiscriminate charity."

"I've *not* thrown it away. Cluness would say that if it made them happier according to their lights it was well invested. I hate the charity that means only medicines, clean sheets, new shoes and sewerage. Let 'em be happy in their own way." There could be no doubt that the three blind men were happy. They loaded their table with spring chickens, Gotha truffles, beefsteaks, and all manner of "alcoholic beverages," till the zinc disappeared beneath the accumulation of plates and bottles. They drank each other's health and they pledged that of Leander, standing up. The Dutchman ordered: "Zwei Billzner more alreatty." The lavender man drank his warmed white wine with gasps of infinite delight, and after the second whiskey bottle had been opened, the Indian began to say strange and terrible things in his own language.

Cluness came in and beamed on them.

"See how happy you've made them, Leander," he said gratefully. "They'll always remember this night."

"They always will," said Leander solemnly.

"I've got to go though," said Cluness. I made as if to go with him but Leander plucked my coat under the table. I caught his eye.

"I guess we two will stay," said I. Cluness left, thanking us again and again.

"I don't know what it is," said I seriously to Leander, "but to-night you seem to me to be too good to be wholesome."

"I," said Leander, blankly. "But I suppose I should expect to be misjudged."

Just then the Kanaka woman came over to give us our check.

"This is on me," said Leander, but he was so slow in fumbling for his purse that I was obliged, in all decency, to pay.

After she left *us,* the Kanaka went over to the blind men's table, and, check-pad in hand, ran her eye over the truffles, beer, chicken, beefsteak, wine and whiskey, and made out her check.

"Four dollars, six bits," she announced.

There was a silence, not one of the blind men moved.

"Watch now," said Leander.

"Four, six bits," repeated the Kanaka, her hand on her hip.

Still none of the blind men moved.

"Vail, den," cried the Dutchman, "vich von you two vellars has dose money, pay oop. Fier thalers und sax beets."

"I haven't it," exclaimed the lavender man, "Jim has it," he added, turning to the Indian.

"No have got, no have got," grunted the Indian. "*You* have got, you or Charley."

I looked at Leander.

"Now, what have you done?"

For answer Leander showed me three five dollar gold pieces in the palm of his hand.

"Each one of those chaps thinks that one of the other two has the gold piece. I just pretended to give it to one of 'em, jingled my coin, and then put it back, I didn't give 'em a cent. Each one thought I had given it to the other two. How could they tell, they were blind, don't you see."

I reached for my hat.

"I'm going to get out of here."

Leander pulled me back.

"Not just yet, wait a few moments. Listen."

"Vail, vail," cried the Dutchman, beginning to get red. "You doand vants to cheats Missus Amaloa, den berhaps—yes, Zhim," he cried to the

Indian, "pay oop, or ees ut *you* den, Meest'r Paites, dat hab dose finf thalers?"

"No have got," gurgled the Indian, swaying in his place as he canted the neck of the whiskey bottle towards his lips.

"I thought you had the money," protested Mr. Bates, the lavender man, "you or Jim."

"No have got," whooped the Indian, beginning to get angry. "Hug-gh! *You* got money. He give *you* money," and he turned his face towards the Dutchman.

"That's what *I* thought," asserted Mr. Bates.

"Tausend Teufels *no,*" shouted the other. I tell you *no.*"

"You, you," growled the Indian, plucking at Mr. Bates' coat sleeve, "you have got."

"Yah, soh," cried the Dutchman, shaking his finger at the lavender man, excitedly, "pay dose finf thalers, Meest'r Paites."

"Pay yourself," exclaimed the other, "I haven't touched them. I'll be *any* name, I'll be *any* name if I've touched them."

"Well, I ain't going to wait here all night," shrilled the Kanaka woman impatiently. The Dutchman shook his finger solemnly towards

where he thought the Indian was sitting.

"It's der Indyun. It's Zhim. Get ut vrom Zhim."

"Lie, lie," vociferated the Indian, "white man lie. No have got. *You* hav got, or *you*."

"I'll turn my pockets inside out," exclaimed Mr. Bates.

"Schmarty," cried the Dutchman. "Can I *see* dose pocket?"

"Thief, thief," exclaimed the Indian, shaking his long black hair. "You steal money."

The other two turned on him savagely.

"There aint no man going to call me that."

"Vat he say, vait, und I vill his het mit der boddle demolisch. Who you say dat to, *mee*, or Meest'r Bates?"

"Oh, you make me tired," cried the lavender man, "you two. *One* of you two, pay Missus Amaloa and quit fooling."

"Come on," cried the Kanaka, "pay up or I'll ring for the police."

"Vooling, vooling," shouted the Dutchman, dancing in his rage. "You sheats Missus Amaloa und you gall dot vooling."

"*Who* cheats," cried the other two simultaneously.

"Vail, how do *I* know," yelled the Dutchman, purple to the eyes. "How do *I* know vich."

The Kanaka turned to Leander.

"Say, which of these fellows did you give that money to?"

Leander came up.

"Ah-h, *now* we vill know," said the Dutchman.

Leander looked from one to the other. Then an expression of perplexity came into his face. He scratched an ear.

"Well, I thought it was this German gentleman."

"Vat!"

"Only it seems to me I had the money in my left hand, and he, you see, is on the right hand of the table. It might have been him, and then again it might have been one of the other two gentlemen. It's so difficult to remember. Wasn't it you," turning to Mr. Bates, "or no, wasn't it *you,"* to the Indian. "But it *couldn't* have been the Indian gentleman, and it couldn't have been Mr. Bates here, and yet I'm sure it wasn't the German gentleman, and, however, I *must* have given it to one of the three. Didn't I lay the coin down on the table and go away and leave it," Leander struck his forehead. "Yes, I think that's

what I did. I'm sorry," he said to the Kanaka, "that you are having any trouble, it's some misunderstanding."

"Oh, I'll get it all right," returned the Kanaka, confidently. "Come on, one of you fellows dig up."

Then the quarrel broke out afresh. The three blind men rose to their feet, blackguarding and vilifying one another till the room echoed. Now it was Mr. Bates and the Dutchman versus the Indian, now the Indian and Dutchman versus Mr. Bates, now the Indian and Mr. Bates versus the Dutchman. At every instant the combinations varied with kaleidoscopic swiftness. They shouted, they danced, and they shook their fists towards where they guessed each other's faces were. The Indian, who had been drinking whiskey between intervals of the quarrel, suddenly began to rail and howl in his own language, and at times even the Dutchman lapsed into the vernacular. The Kanaka woman lost her wits altogether, and declared that in three more minutes she would ring for the police.

Then all at once the Dutchman swung both fists around him and caught the Indian a tremendous crack in the side of the head. The Indian vented

an ear-splitting war-whoop and began pounding Mr. Bates who stood next to him. In the next instant the three were fighting all over the room. They lost each other, they struck furious blows at the empty air, they fell over tables and chairs, or suddenly came together with a dreadful shock and terrible cries of rage. The Dutchman bumped against Leander and before he could get away had smashed his silk hat down over his ears. The noise of their shouting could have been heard a block.

"Thief, thief."

"Teef yourselluf, pay oop dose finf thalers."

"No have got, no have got."

And then the door swung in and four officers began rounding them up like stampeded sheep. Not until he was in the wagon could the Dutchman believe that it was not the Indian and Mr. Bates who had him by either arm, and even in the wagon, as they were being driven to the precinct station-house, the quarrel broke out from time to time.

As we heard the rattle of the patrol-wagon's wheels growing fainter over the cobbles, we rose to go. The Kanaka stood with her hands on her hips glaring at the zinc table with its remnants of

truffle, chicken and beefsteak and its empty bottles. Then she exclaimed, "And *I'm* shy four dollars and six bits."

On the following Saturday night Leander and I were coming from a Mexican dinner at Luna's. Suddenly some one caught our arms from behind. It was Cluness.

"I want to thank you fellows again," he exclaimed, "for your kindness to those three blind chaps the other night. It was really good of you. I believe they had five dollars to spend between them. It was really fine of you, Leander."

"Oh, I don't mind five dollars," said Leander, "if it can make a poor fellow any happier for a few moments. That's the only thing that's worth while in this life."

"I'll bet you felt better and happier for doing it."

"Well, it did make me happy."

"Of course, and those three fellows will never forget that night."

"No, I guess they won't," said Leander.

Son of a Sheik

Son of a Sheik

THE smell of the warm slime on the Jeliffe River and the sweet, heavy and sickening odour that exhaled into the unspeakable heat of the desert air from the bunches of dead and scorched water-reeds are with me yet; also the sight of the long stretch of dry mud bank, rising by shallow and barely perceptible degrees to the edge of the desert sands, and thus disclosed by the shrinkage of the Jeliffe during the hot months. The mud banks were very broad and very black except where they touched the desert; here the sand had sifted over them in light transparent sprinklings. In rapidly drying under the sun of the Sahara, they had cracked and warped into thousands of tiny concave cakes that looked, for all the world, like little saucers in which Indian ink has been mixed. (If you are an artist, as was Thévenot, you will the better understand this.)

Then there was the reach of the desert that drew off on either hand and rolled away, ever so

gently, toward the place where the hollow sky dropped out of sight behind the shimmering horizon, swelling grandly and gradually like some mighty breast which, panting for breath in the horrible heat, had risen in a final gasp and had then, in the midst of it, suddenly stiffened and become rigid. On this colourless bosom of the desert, where nothing stirred but the waxing light in the morning and the waning light in the night, lay tumbled red and gray rocks, with thin drifts of sand in their rifts and crevices and grey-green cacti squatting or sprawling in their blue shadows. And there was nothing more, nothing, nothing, except the appalling heat and the maddening silence.

And in the midst of it all,—we.

Now "we" broadly and generally speaking, were the small right wing of General Pawtrot's division of the African service; speaking less broadly and less generally, "we" were the advance-guard of said division; and, speaking in the narrowest and most particular sense, "we" were the party of war-correspondents, specials, extras, etc., who were accompanying said advance-guard of said wing of said army of said service for reasons herein to be set forth.

As the long, black scow of the commissariat went crawling up the torpid river with the advance-guard straggling along upon the right, "we" lay upon the deck under the shadow of the scow's awning and talked and drank seltzer.

I forget now what led up to it, but Ponscarme had said that the Arabs were patriotic, when Bab Azzoun cut in and said something which I shall repeat as soon as I have told you about Bab Azzoun himself.

Bab Azzoun had been born twenty-nine years before this time, at Tlemcen, of Kabyle parents (his father was a sheik). He had been transplanted to France at the age of ten, and had flourished there in a truly remarkable manner. He had graduated fifth from the Polytéchnique; he had written books that had been *"couronné par l'Académie";* he had become naturalised; he had been prominent in politics (no one can cut a wide swath in Paris in anything without hitting against *la politique;*) he had occupied important positions in two embassies; he was a diplomat of no mean qualities; he had influence; he dressed in faultless French fashion; he had owned "Crusader"; he had lost money on him; he had applied to the government for the office of *"Sous-chef-des*

bureaux-Arabes dans l'Oran," in order to recoup; he had obtained it; he had come on with "us", and was now on this, his first visit to his fatherland since his tenth year, on his way to his post.

And when Ponscarme had spoken thus about the patriotism of the Arabs, Bab Azzoun made him answer: "The Arabs are not sufficiently educated to be true patriots."

"Bah!" said Santander, "a man does not require to be educated in order to be a patriot. And, indeed, the rudest nations have ever been the most devotedly patriotic."

"Yes," said Bab Azzoun, "but it is a narrow and a very selfish patriotism."

"I can't see that," put in Ponscarme; "a patriot is like an egg—he is either good or bad. There is no such thing as a 'good enough egg,' there is no such thing as a 'good enough patriot'—if a man is one at all, he is a perfect one."

"I agree," answered Bab Azzoun; "yet patriotism can be more or less narrow. Listen and I will explain"—he raised himself from the deck on his elbow and gestured with the amber mouthpiece of his chibouk—"Patriotism has passed through five distinct stages; first, it was only love of family—of parents and kindred; then, as the

family grows and expands into the tribe, it, too, as merely a large family, becomes the object of affection, of patriotic devotion. This is the second stage—the stage of the tribe, the clan. In the third stage, the tribe has sought protection behind the inclosure of walls. It is the age of cities; patriotism is the devotion to the city; men are Athenians ere Grecians, Romans ere Italians. In the next period, patriotism means affection for the state, for the county, for the province; and Burgundian, Norman and Fleming gave freely of their breast-blood for Burgundy, Normandy and Flanders; while we of to-day form the latest, but not the last, link of the lengthening chain by honouring, loving and serving the *country* above all considerations, be they of tribe, or town, or tenure. Yet I do not believe this to be the last, the highest, the noblest form of patriotism.

"No," continued Bab Azzoun, "this development shall go on, ever expanding, ever mounting, until, carried upon its topmost crest, we attain to that height from which we can look down upon the world as our country, humanity as our countrymen, and he shall be the best patriot who is the least patriotic."

"Ah-h, *fichtre!*" exclaimed Santander, listlessly,

throwing a cushion at Bab Azzoun's head; *"va te coucher.* It's too hot to theorise; you're either a great philosopher, Bab, or a large sized"—he looked at him over the rim of his tin cup before concluding—"idiot."

But Bab Azzoun had gone on talking in the meanwhile, and now finishing with "and so you must not blame me, if, looking upon them" (he meant the Arabs) "and theirs, in this light, I find this African campaign a sorry business for France to be engaged in,—a vast and powerful government terrorising into submission a horde of half-starved fanatics," he yawned, "all of which is very bad—very bad. Give me some more seltzer."

We were aroused by the sudden stoppage of the scow. A detachment of "Zephyrs," near us upon the right bank, scrambled together in a hollow square. A battalion of Coulouglis, with *haik* and *bournous* rippling, scuttled by us at a gallop, and the Twenty-Third Chasseurs d'Afrique in the front line halted at an "order" on the crest of a sand ridge, which hid the horizon from sight. The still, hot air of the Sahara was suddenly pervaded with something that roused us to our feet in an instant. Thévenot whipped out his ever-ready sketch-book and began blocking in the landscape

and the position of the troops, while Santander snatched his note-book and stylograph.

Of the scene which now gathered upon us, I can remember little, only out of that dark chaos can I rescue a few detached and fragmentary impressions—all the more vivid, nevertheless, from their isolation, all the more distinct from the grey blur of the background against which they trace themselves.

Instantly, somewhere disquietingly near, an event, or rather a whirl of events that rushed and writhed themselves together into a maze of dizzying complexity, suddenly evolved and widened like the fierce, quick rending open of some vast scroll, and there were zigzag hurryings to and fro and a surging heavenward of a torrent of noises, noises of men and noises of feet, noises of horses and noises of arms, noises that hustled fiercely upward above the brown mass and closed together in the desert air, blending or jarring one with another, joining and separating, reuniting and dividing; noises that rattled; noises that clanked; noises that boomed, or shrilled, or thundered, or quavered. And then came sight of blue-grey tumulous curtains—but whether of smoke or dust, I could not say, tumbling and billowing, bellying out with

the hot tempest-breath of the battle-demon that raged within, and whose outermost fringes were torn by serrated files of flashing steel and wavering ranks of red.

And this was all at first. I knew we had been attacked and that behind those boiling smoke-billows, somewhere and somehow, men, infuriated into beasts, were grappling and struggling, each man, with every sinew on the strain, striving to kill his fellow.

And now we were in the midst of a hollow square of our soldiery, yet how we came there I cannot recall, though I remember that the water of the Jeliffe made my clothes heavy and uncomfortable, although a mortal fear sat upon me of being shot down by some of our own frenzied soldiers. And then came that awful rib-cracking pressure, as, from some outward, unseen cause, the square was thrown back upon itself. And with it all the smell of sweat of horses, and of men, the odour of the powder-smoke, the blinding, suffocating, stupefying clouds of dust, the horrible fear, greater than all others, of being pushed down beneath those thousands of trampling feet, the pitch of excitement that sickens and weakens, the momentary consciousness—vanishing as soon as

felt—that this was what men called "war," and that we were experiencing the reality of what we had so often read.

It was not inspiring; there was no romance, no poetry about it; there was nothing in it but the hideous jar, one against the other, of men drunk with the blood-lust that eighteen hundred years had not quenched.

I looked at Bab Azzoun; he was standing at the gunwale of the scow (somehow we were back on the scow again) with an unloaded pistol in his hand. He was watching the battle on the bank. His nostrils quivered, and he shifted his feet exactly like an excited thorough-bred. On a sudden, a trooper of the Eleventh Cuirassiers came spinning round and round out of the brown of the battle, gulping up blood, and pitched, wheezing, face downwards, into the soft ooze where the river licked at the bank, raising ruddy bubbles in the water as he blew his life-breath in gasps into it, and raking it into gridiron patterns as his quivering, blue fingers closed into fists. Instantly afterward came a mighty rush across the river beneath our very bows. Forty-odd cuirassiers burst into it, followed by eighty or a hundred Kabyles.

I can recall just how the horse-hoofs rattled on

the saucer-like cakes of dry mud and flung them up in countless fragments behind them. They were a fine sight, those Kabyles, with their fierce, red horses, their dazzling white *bournouses*, their long, thin, murderous rifle-barrels, thundering and splashing past, while from the whole mass of them, from under the shadow of every white *haik*, from every black-bearded lip, was rolling their war-cry: "Allah, Allah-il-Allah!"

Some long dormant recollections stirred in Bab Azzoun at this old battle-shout. As he faced them now, he was no longer the cold, cynical *boulevardier* of the morning. He looked as he must have looked when he played, a ten year-old boy, about the feet of the horses in his father's black tent. He saw the long lines of the *douars* of his native home; he saw the camels, and the caravan crawling toward the sunset; he saw the women grinding meal; he saw his father, the bearded sheik; he saw the Arab horsemen riding down to battle; he saw the palm-broad spear-points and the blue yataghans. In an instant of time all the long years of culture and education were stripped away as a garment. Once more he stood and stepped the Kabyle. And with these recollections, his long-forgotten native speech came rushing to his tongue, and in a long,

shrill cry, he answered his countrymen in their own language:

"Allah-il-Allah, Mohammed ressoul Allah."

He passed me at a bound, leaped from the scow upon the back of a riderless horse, and, mingling with the Kabyles, rode out of sight.

And that was the last I ever saw of Bab Azzoun.

A Defense of the Flag

A Defense of the Flag

IT had been the celebration of the feast of the Holy St. Patrick, and the various Irish societies of the city had turned out in great force—Sons of Erin, Fenians, Cork Rebels, and all. The procession had formed on one of the main avenues and had marched and countermarched up and down through the American city; had been reviewed by the mayor standing on the steps of the City Hall and wearing a green sash; and had finally disbanded in the afternoon in the business quarter of the city. So that now the streets in that vicinity were full of the perspiring members of the parade, the emerald colour flashing in and out of the slow moving maze of the crowd, like strands of green in the warp and woof of a loom.

There were marshals of the procession, with batons and big green rosettes, breathing easily once more after the long agony of sitting upon a nervous horse that walked sideways. There were the occupants of the endless line of carriages, with

their green sashes, stretching their cramped and stiffened legs. There were the members of the various political clubs and secret societies, in their one good suit of ready-made clothes, cotton gloves, and silver-fringed scarfs. There was the little girl, with green tassels on her boots, who had walked by her father's side carrying a set bouquet of cut flowers in a lace paper-holder. There was the little boy who wore a green high hat, with a pipe stuck in the brim, and who carried the water for the band; and there were the members of the groups upon the floats, with overcoats and sacques thrown over their costumes and spangles.

The men were in great evidence in and around the corner saloons talking aloud, smoking, drinking, and spitting, and calling for "Jim," or "Connors," or "Duffy," over the heads of the crowd, and what with the speeches, and the beer, and the frequent fights, and the appropriate damning of England and the Orangemen, the day promised to end in right spirit and proper mood.

It so came about that young Shotover, on his way to his club, met with one of these groups near the City Hall, and noticed that they continually looked up towards its dome and seemed very well pleased with what they saw there. After he

had passed them some little distance, Shotover, as well, looked up in that direction and saw that the Irish flag was flying from the staff above the cupola.

Shotover was American-bred and American-born, and his father and mother before him and their father and mother before them, and so on and back till one brought up in the hold of a ship called the *Mayflower,* further back than which it is not necessary to go.

He never voted. He did not know enough of the trend of national politics even to bet on the presidential elections. He did not know the names of the aldermen of his city, nor how many votes were controlled by the leaders of the Dirigo or Comanche Clubs; but when he was told that the Russian *moujik* or the Bulgarian serf, who had lived for six months in America (long enough for their votes to be worth three dollars), was as much of an American citizen as himself, he thought of the Shotovers who had framed the constitution in '75, had fought for it in '13 and '64, and wondered if this were so. He had a strange and stubborn conviction that whatever was American was right and whatever was right was American, and that somehow his country had nothing to be

ashamed of in the past, nor afraid of in the future, for all the monstrous corruptions and abuses that obtained at present.

But just now this belief had been rudely jarred, and he walked on slowly to his club, the blood gradually flushing his face up to the roots of his hair. Once there, he sat for a long time in the big bay-window, looking absently out into the street, with eyes that saw nothing, very thoughtful. All at once he took up his hat, clapped it upon his head with the air of a man who has made up his mind, and went out, turning in the direction of the City Hall.

When he arrived there, no one noticed him, for he made it a point to walk with a brisk, determined air, as though he were bent upon some especially important business, "which I am," he said to himself as he went on and up through tessellated corridors, between court-rooms and offices of clerks, commissioners, and collectors.

It was a long time before he found the right stairway, which was a circuitous, ladder-like flight that wormed its way upward between the two walls of the dome. The door leading to the stairway was in a kind of garret above the top floor of the building proper, and was sandwiched in between

coal-bunkers, water-tanks, and gas-meters. Shotover tried it, and found it locked. He swore softly to himself, and attempted to break it open. He soon concluded that this would make too much noise, and so turned about and descended to the floor below. A negro, with an immense goitre and a black velvet skull-cap, was cleaning the woodwork outside a county commissioner's door. He directed Shotover to the porter in the office of the Weather Bureau, if he wished to go up in the cupola for the view. It was after four by this time, and Shotover found the porter of the Weather Bureau piling the chairs on the tables and sweeping out after office-hours.

"Well, you see," said this one, "we don't allow nobody to go up in the cupola. You can get a permit from the architect's office, but I guess they'll be shut up there by now."

"Oh, I'm sorry," said Shotover; "I'm leaving town to-morrow, and I particularly wanted to get the view from the cupola. They say you can see well out into the ocean."

The porter had ignored him by this time, and was sweeping up a great dust. Shotover waited a moment. "You don't think I could arrange to get

up there this afternoon?" he went on. The porter did not turn around.

"We don't allow no one up there without a permit," he answered.

"I suppose," returned Shotover, "that you have the keys?"

No answer.

"You have the keys, haven't you—the keys to the door there at the foot of the stairs?"

"We don't allow no one to go up there without a permit. Didn't you hear me before?"

Shotover took a five-dollar gold piece from his pocket, laid it on the corner of a desk, and contemplated it with reflective sadness. "I'm sorry," he said; "I particularly wanted to see that view before I left."

"Well, you see," said the porter, straightening up, "there was a young feller jumped off there once, and a woman tried to do it a little while after, and the officers in the police station downstairs made us shut it up; but 's long as you only want to see the view and don't want to jump off, I guess it'll be all right," and he leaned one hand against the edge of the desk and coughed slightly behind the other.

While he had been talking, Shotover had seen

between the two windows on the opposite side of the room a very large wooden rack full of pigeon-holes and compartments: The weather and signal-flags were tucked away in these, but on the top was a great folded pile of bunting. It was sooty and grimy, and the new patches in it showed violently white and clean. But Shotover saw, with a strange and new catch at the heart, that it was tri-coloured.

"If you will come along with me now, sir," said the porter, "I'll open the door for you."

Shotover let him go out of the room first, then jumped to the other side of the room, snatched the flag down, and, hiding it as best he could, followed him out of the room. They went up the stairs together. If the porter saw anything, he was wise enough to keep quiet about it.

"I won't bother about waiting for you," said he, as he swung the door open. "Just lock the door when you come down, and leave the key with me at the office. If I ain't there, just give it to the fellow at the news-stand on the first floor, and I can get it in the morning."

"All right," answered Shotover, "I will," and he hugged the flag close to him, going up the narrow stairs two at a time.

After a long while he came out on the narrow railed balcony that ran around the lantern, and paused for breath as he looked around and below him. Then he turned quite giddy and sick for a moment and clutched desperately at the hand-rail, resisting a strong impulse to sit down and close his eyes.

Seemingly insecure as a bubble, the great dome rolled away from him on all sides down to the buttresses around the drum, and below that the gulf seemed endless, stretching down, down, down, to the thin yellow ribbon of the street. Underneath him, the City Hall itself dropped away, a confused heap of tinned roofs, domes, chimneys, and cornices, and beyond that lay the city itself spreading out like a great gray map. Over it there hung a greasy, sooty fog of a dark-brown color. In places the higher buildings over-topped the fog. Here, it was pierced by a slender church-spire. In another place, a dome bulged up over it, or, again, some sky-scraping office-building shouldered itself above its level to the purer, cleaner air. Looking down at the men in the streets, Shotover could see only their feet moving back and forth underneath their hat-brims as they walked. The noises of the city reached him in a subdued and steady murmur,

and the strong wind that was blowing brought him the smell of the vegetable-gardens in the suburbs, the odour of trees and hay from the more distant country, and occasionally a faint whiff of salt from the ocean.

The sight was a sort of inspiration to Shotover. The great American city, with its riches and resources, boiling with the life and energy of a new people, young, enthusiastic, ambitious, and so full of hope and promise for the future, all striving and struggling in the fore part of the march of empire, building a new nation, a new civilisation, a new world, while over it all floated the Irish flag.

Shotover turned back, seized the halyards, and brought the green banner down with a single movement of his arm. Then he knotted the other bundle of bunting to the cords and ran it up. As it reached the top, the bundle twisted, turned on itself, unfolded, suddenly caught the wind, and then, in a single, long billow, rolled out into the stars and bars of Old Glory.

Shotover shut his teeth against a cheer, and the blood went tingling up and down through his body to his very finger-tips. He looked up, leaning his hand against the mast, and felt it quiver

and thrill as the great flag tugged at it. The sound of the halyards rattling and snapping came to his ears like music.

He was not ashamed then to be enthusiastic, and did not feel in the least melodramatic or absurd. He took off his hat, and, as the great flag grew out stiffer and snapped and strained in the wind, looked up at it and said over softly to himself: "Lexington, Valley Forge, Yorktown, Mexico, the Alamo, 1812, Gettysburg, Shiloh, the Wilderness."

Meanwhile the knot of people on the sidewalk below, that had watched his doings, had grown into a crowd. The green badge was upon every breast, and there came to his ears a sound that was out of chord with the minor drone, the worst sound in the human gamut, the sound of an angry mob.

The high, windy air and the excitement of the occasion began to tell on Shotover, so that when half an hour later there came a rush of many feet up the stairway, and a crash upon the door that led up to the lantern, he buttoned his coat tightly around him, and shut his teeth and fists.

When the door finally went down and the first man jumped in, Shotover hit him.

Terence Shannon told about this afterward. "It

was a birdie. Ah, but say, y' ought to of seen um. He let go with his left, like de piston-rod of de engine wot broke loose dat time at de power-house, an' Duffy's had an eye like a fried egg iver since."

The crowd paused, partly through surprise and partly because the body of Mr. Duffy lay across their feet and barred their way. There were about a dozen of them, all more or less drunk. The one exception was Terence Shannon, who was the candidate of the boss of his ward for a number on the force. In view of this fact, Shannon was trying to preserve order. He took advantage of the moment of hesitation to step in between Shotover and the crowd.

"Aw, say, youse fellows rattle me slats, sure. Do yer think the City Hall is the place to scrap, wid the jug only two floors below? Ye'll be havin' the whole shootin'-match of the force up here in a minute. Maybe yer would like to sober up in the 'hole in the wall.' Now just pipe down quiet-like, an' swear um in reg'lar at the station-house down-stairs. Ye've got a straight disturbin'-the-peace case wid um. Ah, sure, straight goods. I ain't givin' yer no gee-hee."

But the crowd stood its ground and glared at Shotover over Shannon's head. Then Connors

yelled and drew out his revolver. "B'yes, we've got a right," he exclaimed. "It's the boord av alderman gave us the permit to show the green flag of ould Ireland here to-day. It's him as is breaking the law, not we, confound you." ("Confound you" was not what Mr. Connors said).

"He's dead on," said Shannon, turning to Shotover. "It's all ye kin do. Yer're actin' agin the law."

Shotover did not answer, but breathed hard through his nose, wondering at the state of things that made it an offense against the American law to protect the American flag. But all at once Shannon passed him and drew his knife across the halyards, and the great flag collapsed and sank slowly down like a wounded eagle. The crowd cheered, and Shannon said in Shotover's ear: " 'Twas to save yer life, me b'y. They're out for blood, sure."

"Now," said Connors, using several altogether impossible nouns and adjectives, "now run up the green flag of ould Ireland again, or ye'll be sorry," and he pointed his revolver at Shotover.

"Say," cried Shannon, in a low voice to Shotover—"say, he's dead stuck on doin' you dirt. I can't hold um. Aw, say, Connors, quit your fool-

in', will you; put up your flashbox—put it up, or—or—" But just here he broke off, and catching up the green flag, threw it out in front of Shotover, and cried, laughing, "Ye'll not have the heart to shoot now."

Shotover struck the flag to the ground, set his foot on it, and catching up Old Glory again, flung it round him and faced them, shouting:

"Now shoot!"

But at this, in genuine terror, Shannon flung his hat down and ran in front of Connors himself, fearfully excited, and crying out: "F'r Gawd's sake, Connors, you don't dast do it. Wake up, will yer, it's mornin'. Do yer want to hiv' us all jugged for twenty years? It's treason and rebellion, and I don't now *what* all, for every mug in the gang, if yer just so much as crook dat forefinger. Put it up, ye damned fool. This is a cat w'at has changed colour."

Something of the gravity of the situation had forced its way through the clogged minds of the others, and, as Shannon spoke the last words, Connors's fore-arm was knocked up and he himself was pulled back into the crowd.

You can not always foretell how one man is going to act, but it is easy to read the intentions of

a crowd. Shotover saw a rush in the eyes of the circle that was contracting about him, and turned to face the danger and to fight for the flag as the Shotovers of the old days had so often done.

In the books, the young aristocrat invariably thrashes the clowns who set upon him. But somehow Shotover had no chance with his clowns at all. He hit out wildly into the air as they ran in, and tried to guard against the scores of fists. But their way of fighting was not that which he had learned at his athletic club. They kicked him in the stomach, and, when they had knocked him down, stamped upon his face. It is hard to feel like a martyr and a hero when you can't draw your breath and when your mouth is full of blood and dust and broken teeth. Accordingly Shotover gave it up, and fainted away.

When the officers finally arrived, they made no distinction between the combatants, but locked them all up under the charge of "Drunk and Disorderly."

Toppan

Toppan

WHEN Frederick Woodhouse Toppan came out of Thibet and returned to the world in general and to San Francisco in particular, he began to know what it meant to be famous. As he entered street cars and hotel elevators he remarked a sudden observant silence on the part of the other passengers. The reporters became a real instead of a feigned annoyance and the papers at large commenced speaking of him by his last name only. He ceased to cut out and paste in his scrap-book, everything that was said of him in the journals and magazines. People composed beforehand clever little things to say to him when they were introduced, and he was asked to indorse new soaps and patented cereals. The great magazines of the country wrote to him for more articles, and his "Through the Highlands of Thibet", already in its fiftieth thousand, was in everybody's hands.

And he was hardly thirty.

To people who had preconceived ideas as to

what an Asiatic explorer should be like, Toppan was disappointing. Where they expected to see a "magnificent physique" in top boots and pith helmet, flung at length upon lion skins, smoking a nargile, they saw only a very much tanned young gentleman, who wore a straw hat and russet leather shoes just like any well dressed man of the period. They felt vaguely defrauded because he looked ordinary and stylish and knew what to do with his hands and feet in a drawing-room.

He had come to San Francisco for three reasons. First because at that place he was fitting out an expedition for Kamtchatka which was to be the big thing of his life, and cause him to be spoken of together with Speke, Nansen and Stanley; second because the manager of the lecture bureau with whom he had signed, had scheduled him to deliver his two lectures there, as he had already done in Boston, New York, and elsewhere; and, third because Victoria Boyden lived there.

When Toppan got back, the rest of Victoria's men friends shrank considerably when she compared them with Toppan. They were of the type who are in the insurance offices of fathers and uncles during the winter, and in the summer are to be found at the fashionable resorts, where they

idle languidly on the beaches in white flannels or play "chopsticks" with the girls on the piano in the hotel parlors. Here, however, was the first white man who had ever crossed Thibet alive, who knew what it meant to go four days without water and who could explain to you the difference between the insanity caused by the lack of sleep and that brought about by a cobra-bite. The men of Victoria's acquaintance never had known what it was to go without two consecutive meals, whereas Toppan at one time in the Himalayas had lived for several weeks upon ten ounces of camel meat per day, after the animals had died under their burdens. Victoria's friends led germans, Toppan led expeditions; their only fatigue came from dancing. Upon one occasion on Mount Everest, Toppan and his companions, caught in a snow-storm where sleep meant death, had kept themselves awake by chewing pipe-tobacco, and rubbing the smarting juice in their eyes. He had had experiences, the like of which none other of her gentlemen friends had ever known and she had cared for him from the first.

When a man tells a girl that he loves her in a voice that can speak in the dialects of the interior Thibetan states around the Tengrinor lake, or

holds her hand in one that has been sunken deep in the throat of a hunger-mad tiger, she cannot well be otherwise than duly impressed.

To look at, Victoria was a queen. Just the woman you would have chosen to be mated with a man like Toppan, five feet eleven in her tennis shoes, with her head flung well back on her shoulders, and the gait of a goddess; she could look down on most men and in general suggested figures of Brunehilde, Boadicea, or Berenice. But to know her was to find her shallow as a sun-shrunken mill-race, to discover that her brilliancy was the cheapest glitter, and to realise that in every way she was lamentably unsuited for the role of Toppan's wife. And no one saw this so well as Toppan himself. He knew that she did not appreciate him at one-tenth his real value, that she never could and never would understand him, and that he was in every way too good for her.

As his wife he felt sure she would only be a hindrance and a stumbling-block in the career that he had planned for himself, if, indeed she did not ruin it entirely.

But first impressions were strong with him, and because when he had first known her she had seemed to be fit consort for an emperor, he had

gone on loving her as such ever since, making excuses for her trivialities, her petty affectations, her lack of interest in his life work, and even at times her unconcealed ridicule of it. For one thing, Victoria wanted him to postpone his expedition for a year, in order that he might marry her, and Toppan objected to this because he was so circumstanced just then that to postpone meant to abandon it.

No man is stronger than his weakest point. Toppan's weak point was Victoria Boyden, and he acknowledged to himself with a good deal of humiliation that he could not make up his mind to break with her. Perhaps he is not to be too severely blamed for this. Living so much apart from women as he did and plunged for such long periods into an atmosphere so entirely different from that of ordinary society, he had come to feel intensely where he felt at all, and had lost the faculty possessed by the more conventional, of easy and ephemeral change from one interest to another. Most of Victoria's admirers in a like case, would have lit a cigarette and walked off the passion between dawn and dark in one night. But Toppan could not do this. It was the one weak strain in his build, "the little rift within the lute."

One of the natural consequences of their intercourse was that they were never happy together and hailed with hardly concealed relief the advent of a third person. They had absolutely no interests in common, and their meetings were made up of trivial bickerings. They generally parted quarrelling, and then immediately sat down to count the days until they should meet again. I have no doubt they loved each other well enough, but somehow they were not made to be mated—and that was all there was about it.

During the month before the Kamtchatka expedition sailed Toppan worked hard. He commanded jointly with Bushby, a lieutenant in the Civil Engineer Corps, and the two toiled from the dawn of one morning till the dawn of the next, perfecting the last details of their undertaking; correcting charts, lading rifles and ammunition, experimenting with beef extracts and pemmican, and corresponding with geographical societies.

Through it all Toppan found time to revise his notes for his last lecture, and to call upon Victoria twice a week.

On one of these occasions he said; "How do you get on with my book, Vic, pretty stupid read-

ing?" He had sent her from Bombay the first copy that his London publishers had forwarded to him.

"Not at all," she answered, "I like it very much, do you know it has all the fascination of a novel for me. Your style is just as clear and strong as can be, and your descriptions of scenery and the strange and novel bits of human nature in such an unfrequented corner of the globe are much more interesting than the most imaginative and carefully elaborated fiction; those botanical and zoological data must be invaluable to scientific men, I should think; but of course I can't understand them very well. How do you do it, Fred? It is certainly very wonderful. One would think that you were a born writer as well as explorer. But now see here, Freddy; I want to talk to you again about putting off your trip to—what do you call it—for just a year, for my sake."

After they had wrangled over this oft-mooted question they parted coldly, and Toppan went away feeling aroused and unhappy.

That night he and Bushby were making a chemical analysis of a new kind of smokeless powder. Bushby poured out a handful of saltpeter and charcoal upon a leaf torn from a back number of

the *Scientific Weekly* and slid it across the table towards him. "Now when you burn this stuff," remarked Toppan, spreading it out upon the table with his finger, "you get a reaction of $2KNO^3+3C=CO^2+CO+$, I forget the rest. Get out your formulae in the bookcase there behind you, will you, and look it up for me?"

While Bushby was fingering the leaves of the volume, Toppan caught sight of his name on the leaf of the *Scientific Weekly* which held the mixture. Looking closely he saw that it occurred in a criticism of his book which he had not yet seen. He brushed the charcoal and saltpeter to one side and ran his eyes over the lines:

"Toppan's great work," said the writer, "is a book not only for the scientist but for all men. Though dealing to a great extent with the technicalities of geography, geology, and the sister sciences, the author has known how to throw his thoughts and observations into a form of remarkable lightness and brilliancy. In Toppan's hands the book has all the fascination of a novel. His style is clear and strong, and his descriptions of scenery, and of the weird and unusual phases of human nature to be met with in such an unfrequented corner of the globe are much more interest-

ing than most of the imaginative and carefully elaborated romances of adventure in the present day. His botanical and zoological data will be invaluable to scientific men. It is rare we find the born explorer a born writer as well."

As he read, Toppan's heart grew cold within his ribs. "She must have learnt it like a parrot," he mused. "I wonder if she even"—

"Equals $CO^2+CO+N^3+KCO^3$," said Bushby turning to the table again, "come on, old man, hurry up and let's get through with this. It's nearly three o'clock."

The next evening Toppan was to deliver his lecture at the Grand Opera House, but in the afternoon he called upon Victoria with a purpose. She was out at the time but he determined to wait for her, and sat down in the drawing-room until she should come. Presently he saw his book with its marbled cover—familiar to him now as the face of a child to its father,—lying conspicuously upon the center table. It was the copy he had mailed to her from Bombay. He picked it up and ran over the leaves; not one of them had been cut. He replaced the book upon the table and left the house.

That night the Grand Opera House was packed

to the doors and the street in front was full of hoarse, over-worked policemen and wailing coachmen. The awning was out over the sidewalk and the steps of the church across the street were banked with row upon row of watching faces. It was known that this was to be the last lecture of Toppan's before he plunged into the wilderness again, and that the world would not see him for five years. The mayor of the city introduced him in a speech that was too long, and then Toppan stood up and faced the artillery of opera-glasses, and tried not to look into the right-hand proscenium box that held Victoria Boyden and her party.

He kept the audience spell-bound for an hour, while he forgot his useless notes, forgot his hearers and the circumstances of time and place, forgot about Victoria Boyden and their mean little squabbles and remembered only that he was Toppan, the great explorer, who had led his men through the interior of Thibet, and had lived to tell it to these people now before him. For an hour he made the people too, forget themselves in him and his story, till they felt something of what he had felt on those occasions when Hope was a phantom scattering chaff, when Resolve wore thin under friction of disaster, when the wheels of Life ran very low and

men thanked God that they *could* die. For an hour he led them steadily into the heart of the unknown: the twilight of the unseen. Then he had an inspiration.

He had worked himself up to a mood wherein he was himself at his very best, when his chosen life-work made all else seem trivial and the desire to do great things was big within him. In this mood he somehow happened to remember Victoria Boyden, which he should not have done because she was not to be thought of in connection with great deeds and high resolves. But just at that moment Toppan felt his strength and knew how great he really was, and how small and belittled she seemed in comparison. She had practiced a small deception upon him, had done him harm and would do him more. He suddenly resolved to break with her at that very moment and place while he was strong and able to do it.

He did it by cleverly working into his talk a little story whose real meaning no one but Victoria understood. For the audience it was but a bright little bit of folk-lore of upper India. For Victoria, he might as well have struck her across the face. It was cruel; it was even vulgarly cruel, which is brutal, it was vindictive and perhaps cowardly, but

the man was smarting under a long continued bitterness and he had at last turned and with closed eyes struck back savagely.

The exalted mood which had brought this about, was with him during the rest of the evening, was with him when he drove back to his rooms in his coupe with Bushby, and was with him as he flung himself to bed and went to sleep with a deep sigh of relief for that it was now over and done with forever.

But it left him during the night and he awoke the next morning to a realisation of what he had done and of all he had lost. He began by remembering Victoria as he had first known her, by recalling only what was good in her, and by palliating all that was bad. From this starting point he went on till he was in an agony of grief and remorse and ended by lashing himself into the belief that Victoria had been his inspiration and had given zest and interest to every thing he had done. Now he bitterly regretted that he had thrown her over. He had never in his life before loved her so much. He was unfitted for work during all that day and passed the next night in unavailing lamentations. His morning's mail brought him face to face with the crisis of his life.

It came in the shape of a letter from Victoria Boyden.

It was a very thick and a very heavy letter and she must have spent most of the previous day in writing it. He was surprised that she should have written him at all after what had passed on that other evening, but he was deeply happy as well because he knew precisely what the letter would be, before he opened it. It would be a petition for his forgiveness and a last attempt to win him back to her again.

And Toppan knew that she would succeed. He knew that in his present mood he would make any sacrifice for her sake. He foresaw that her appeal would be too strong for him. That was, if he opened and read her letter. Just now the question was, should he do it? If he read that letter he knew that he was lost, his career would stop where it was. To be great he had only to throw it unopened into the fire; yes, but to be great without her, was it worth the while? What would fame and honour and greatness be, without her? He realised that the time had come to choose between her and his career and that it all depended upon the opening of her letter. Two hours later, he flung himself down before his table and took her

letter in his hand. His fingers itched for the touch of it. Close to his elbow lay a little copper knife with poison grooves, such as are used by the Hill-tribes in the Kuen-Lun mountains. Toppan kept it for a paper cutter; just now he picked it up. For a long time he remained sitting, holding Victoria's letter in one hand, the little knife in the other. Then he put the point under the flap of the envelope and slowly cut it open.

Two weeks later the Kamtchatka Expedition sailed with Bushby in command. Toppan did not go; he was married to Victoria Boyden that Fall.

Last season I met Toppan at Coronado Beach. The world has about forgotten him now, but he is quite content as he is. He is head clerk in old Mr. Boyden's insurance office and he plays a capital game of tennis.

A Caged Lion

A Caged Lion

IN front of the entrance a "spieler" stood on a starch-box and beat upon a piece of tin with a stick, and we weakly succumbed to his frenzied appeals and went inside. We did this, I am sure, partly to please the "spieler," who would have been dreadfully disappointed if we had not done so, but partly, too, to please Toppan, who was always interested in the great beasts and liked to watch them.

It is possible that you may remember Toppan as the man who married Victoria Boyden, and, in so doing, thrust his greatness from him and became a bank clerk instead of an explorer. After he married, he came to be quite ashamed of what he had done in Thibet and Africa and other unknown corners of the earth, and, after a while, very seldom spoke of that part of his life at all; or, when he did, it was only to allude to it as a passing boyish fancy, altogether foolish and silly, like calf-love and early attempts at poetry.

"I used to think I was going to set the world

on fire at one time," he said once; "I suppose every young fellow has some such ideas. I only made an ass of myself, and I'm glad I'm well out of it. Victoria saved me from that."

But this was long afterward. He died hard, and sometimes he would have moments of strength in his weakness, just as before he had given up his career during a moment of weakness in his strength. During the first years after he had given up his career, he thought he was content with the way things had come to be; but it was not so, and now and then the old feeling, the love of the old life, the old ambition, would be stirred into activity again by some sight, or sound, or episode in the conventional life around him. A chance paragraph in a newspaper, a sight of the Arizona deserts of sage and cactus, a momentary panic on a ferry-boat, sometimes even fine music or a great poem would wake the better part of him to the desire of doing great things. At such times the longing grew big and troublous within him to cut loose from it all and get back to those places of the earth where there were neither months nor years, and where the days of the week had no names; where he could feel unknown winds blowing against his face and unnamed mountains rising beneath his

feet; where he could see great sandy, stony stretches of desert with hot, blue shadows, and plains of salt, and thickets of jungle-grass, broken only by the lairs of beasts and the paths the steinbok make when they go down to water.

The most trifling thing would recall all this to him, just as a couple of notes have recalled to you whole arias and overtures. But with Toppan it was as though one had recalled the arias and the overtures and then was not allowed to sing them.

We went into the arena and sat down. The ring in the middle was fenced in by a great, circular iron cage. The tiers of seats rose around this, a band was playing in a box over the entrance, and the whole interior was lighted by an electric globe slung over the middle of the cage.

Inside the cage a brown bear—to me less suggestive of a wild animal than of lap-robes and furriers' signs—was dancing sleepily and allowing himself to be prodded by a person whose celluloid standing-collar showed white at the neck above the green of his Tyrolese costume. The bear was mangy, and his steel muzzle had chafed him, and Toppan said he was corrupted of moth and rust alike, and the audience applauded but feebly when he and his keeper withdrew.

After this we had a clown-elephant, dressed in a bib and tucker and vast baggy breeches—like those of a particularly big French *Turco*—who had lunch with his keeper, and rang the bell and drank his wine and wiped his mouth with a handkerchief like a bed-quilt, and pulled the chair from underneath his companion, seeming to be amused at it all with a strange sort of suppressed elephantine mirth.

And then, after they had both made their bow and gone out, in bounded and tumbled the dogs, barking and grinning all over, jumping up on their stools and benches, wriggling and pushing one another about, giggling and excited like so many kindergarten children on a show-day. I am sure they enjoyed their performance as much as the audience did, for they never had to be told what to do, and seemed only too eager for their turn to come. The best of it all was that they were quite unconscious of the audience and appeared to do their tricks for the sake of the tricks themselves, and not for the applause which followed them. And then, after the usual programme of wicker cylinders, hoops, and balls was over, they all rushed off amid a furious scrattling of paws and filliping of tails and heels.

While this was going on, we had been hearing from time to time a great sound, half-whine, half-rumbling guttural cough, that came from somewhere behind the exit from the cage. It was repeated at rapidly decreasing intervals, and grew lower in pitch until it ended in a short bass grunt. It sounded cruel and menacing, and when at its full volume the wood of the benches under us thrilled and vibrated.

There was a little pause in the programme while the arena was cleared and new and much larger and heavier paraphernalia was set about, and a gentleman in a frock coat and a very shiny hat entered and announced "the world's greatest lion-tamer." Then he went away and the tamer came in and stood expectantly by the side of the entrance, there was another short wait and the band struck a long minor chord.

And then they came in, one after the other, with long, crouching, lurching strides, not at all good-humouredly, like the dogs, or the elephant, or even the bear, but with low-hanging heads, surly, watchful, their eyes gleaming with the rage and hate that burned in their hearts and that they dared not vent. Their loose, yellow hides rolled and rippled over the great muscles as they moved,

and the breath coming from their hot, half-open mouths turned to steam as it struck the air.

A huge, blue-painted see-saw was dragged out to the centre, and the tamer made a sharp sound of command. Slowly, and with twitching tails, two of them obeyed and clambering upon the balancing-board swung up and down, while the music played a see-saw waltz. And all the while their great eyes flamed with the detestation of the thing and their black upper lips curled away from their long fangs in protest of this hourly renewed humiliation and degradation.

And one of the others, while waiting his turn to be whipped and bullied, sat up on his haunches and faced us and looked far away beyond us over the heads of the audience—over the continent and ocean, as it were—as though he saw something in that quarter that made him forget his present surroundings.

"You grand old brute," muttered Toppan; and then he said: "Do you know what you would see if you were to look into his eyes now? You would see Africa, and unnamed mountains, and great stony stretches of desert, with hot blue shadows, and plains of salt, and lairs in the jungle-grass, and lurking places near the paths the stein-

bok make when they go down to water. But now he's hampered and caged—*is* there anything worse than a caged lion?—and kept from the life he loves and was made for"—just here the tamer spoke sharply to him, and his eyes and crest drooped—"and ruled over," concluded Toppan, "by some one who is not so great as he, who has spoiled what was best in him and has turned his powers to trivial, resultless uses—some one weaker than he, yet stronger. Ah, well, old brute, it was yours once, we will remember that."

They wheeled out a clumsy velocipede, built expressly for him, and, while the lash whistled and snapped about him, the conquered king heaved himself upon it and went around and around the ring, while the band played a quick-step, the audience broke into applause, and the tamer smirked and bobbed his well-oiled head. I thought of Samson performing for the Philistines and Thusnelda at the triumph of Germanicus. The great beasts, grand though conquered, seemed to be the only dignified ones in the whole business. I hated the audience who saw their shame from behind iron bars; I hated myself for being one of them; and I hated the smug, sniggering tamer.

This latter had been drawing out various stools

and ladders, and now arranged the lions upon them so they should form a pyramid, with himself on top.

Then he swung himself up among them, with his heels upon their necks, and, taking hold of the jaws of one, wrenched them apart with a great show of strength, turning his head to the audience so that all should see.

And just then the electric light above him cackled harshly, guttered, dropped down to a pencil of dull red, then went out, and the place was absolutely dark.

The band stopped abruptly with a discord, and there was an instant of silence. Then we heard the stools and ladders clattering as the lions leaped down, and straightway four pairs of lambent green spots burned out of the darkness and traveled swiftly about here and there, crossing and re-crossing one another like the lights of steamers in a storm. Heretofore, the lions had been sluggish and inert; now they were aroused and alert in an instant, and we could hear the swift *pad-pad* of their heavy feet as they swung around the arena and the sound of their great bodies rubbing against the bars of the cage as one and the other passed nearer to us.

I don't the think the audience at all appreciated the situation at first, for no one moved or seemed excited, and one shrill voice suggested that the band should play "When the electric lights go out."

"Keep perfectly quiet, please!" called the tamer out of the darkness, and a certain peculiar ring in his voice was the first intimation of a possible danger.

But Toppan knew; and as we heard the tamer fumbling for the catch of the gate, which he somehow could not loose in the darkness, he said, with a rising voice: "He wants to get that gate open pretty quick."

But for their restless movements the lions were quiet; they uttered no sound, which was a bad sign. Blinking and dazed by the garish blue whiteness of a few moments before, they could see perfectly now where the tamer was blind.

"Listen," said Toppan. Near to us, and on the inside of the cage, we could hear a sound as of some slender body being whisked back and forth over the surface of the floor. In an instant I guessed what it was; one of the lions was crouched there, whipping his sides with his tail.

"When he stops that he'll spring," said Toppan, excitedly.

"Bring a light, Jerry—quick!" came the tamer's voice.

People were clambering to their feet by this time, talking loud, and we heard a woman cry out.

"Please keep as quiet as possible, ladies and gentlemen!" cried the tamer; "it won't do to excite—"

From the direction of the voice came the sound of a heavy fall and a crash that shook the iron gratings in their sockets.

"He's got him!" shouted Toppan.

And then what a scene! In that thick darkness every one sprang up, stumbling over the seats and over each other, all shouting and crying out, suddenly stricken with a panic fear of something they could not see. Inside the barred death-trap every lion suddenly gave tongue at once, until the air shook and sang in our ears. We could hear the great cats hurling themselves against the bars, and could see their eyes leaving brassy streaks against the darkness as they leaped. Two more sprang as the first had done toward that quarter of the cage from which came sounds of stamping and struggling, and then the tamer began to scream.

I think that so long as I shall live I shall not forget the sound of the tamer's scream. He did not scream as a woman would have done, from the head, but from the chest, which sounded so much worse that I was sick from it in a second with that sickness that weakens one at the pit of the stomach and along the muscles at the back of the legs. He did not pause for a second. Every breath was a scream, and every scream was alike, and one heard through it all the long snarls of satisfied hate and revenge, muffled by the man's clothes and the *rip, rip* of the cruel, blunt claws.

Hearing it all in the dark, as we did, made it all the more dreadful. I think for a time I must have taken leave of my senses. I was ready to vomit for the sickness that was upon me, and I beat my hands raw upon the iron bars or clasped them over my ears against the sounds of the dreadful thing that was doing behind them. I remember praying aloud that it might soon be over, so only those screams might be stopped.

It seemed as though it had gone on for hours, when some men rushed in with a lantern and long, sharp irons. A hundred voices cried: "Here he is, over here!" and they ran around outside the cage and threw the light of the lantern on a place

where a heap of grey, gold-laced clothes writhed and twisted beneath three great bulks of fulvous hide and bristling black mane.

The irons were useless. The three furies dragged their prey out of their reach and crouched over it again and recommenced. No one dared to go into the cage, and still the man lived and struggled and screamed.

I saw Toppan's fingers go to his mouth, and through that medley of dreadful noises there issued a sound that, sick as I was, made me shrink anew and close my eyes and teeth and shudder as though some cold slime had been poured through the hollow of my bones where the marrow should be. It was as the noise of the whistling of a fine whip-lash, mingled with the whirr of a locust magnified a hundred times, and ended in an abrupt clacking noise thrice repeated.

At once I remembered where I had heard it before, because, having once heard the hiss of an aroused and angry serpent, no child of Eve can ever forget it.

The sound that now came from between Toppan's teeth and that filled the arena from wall to wall, was the sound that I had heard once before in the Paris Jardin des Plantes at feeding-time—

the sound made by the great constrictors, when their huge bodies are looped and coiled like a *reata* for the throw that never misses, that never relaxes, and that no beast of the field is built strong enough to withstand. All the filthy wickedness and abominable malice of the centuries since the Enemy first entered into that shape that crawls, was concentrated in that hoarse, whistling hiss—a hiss that was cold and piercing like an icicle-made sound. It was not loud, but had in it some sort of penetrating quality that cut through the waves of horrid sounds about us, as the snake-carved prow of a Viking galley might have cut its way through the tumbling eddies of a tide-rip.

At the second repetition the lions paused. None better than they knew what was the meaning of that hiss. They had heard it before in their native hunting-grounds in the earlier days of summer, when the first heat lay close over all the jungle like the hollow of the palm of an angry god. Or if they themselves had not heard it, their sires before them had, and the fear of the thing bred into their bones suddenly leaped to life at the sound and gripped them and held them close.

When for a third time the sound sung and shrilled in their ears, their heads drew between

their shoulders, their great eyes grew small and glittering, the hackles rose, and stiffened on their backs, their tails drooped, and they backed slowly to the further side of the cage and cowered there, whining and beaten.

Toppan wiped the sweat from the inside of his hands and went into the cage with the keepers and gathered up the panting, broken body, with its twitching fingers and dead, white face and ears, and carried it out. As they lifted it, the handful of pitiful medals dropped from the shredded grey coat and rattled down upon the floor. In the silence that had now succeeded, it was about the only sound one heard.

As we sat that evening on the porch of Toppan's house, in a fashionable suburb of the city, he said, for the third time: "I had that trick from a Mpongwee headman," and added: "It was while I was at Victoria Falls, waiting to cross the Kalahari Desert."

Then he continued, his eyes growing keener and his manner changing: "There is some interesting work to be done in that quarter by some one. You see, the Kalahari runs like this"—he drew the lines on the ground with his cane—"coming down in

something like this shape from the Orange River to about the twentieth parallel south. The aneroid gives its average elevation about six hundred feet. I didn't cross it at the time, because we had sickness and the porters cut. But I made a lot of geological observations, and from these I have built up a theory that the Kalahari is no desert at all, but a big, well-watered plateau, with higher ground on the east and west. The tribes, too, thereabout call the place *Linoka-Noka,* and that's the Bantu for rivers upon rivers. They're nasty, though, these Bantu, and gave us a lot of trouble. They have a way of spitting little poisoned thorns into you unawares, and your tongue swells up and turns blue and your teeth fall out and—"

His wife Victoria came out to us in evening dress.

"Ah, Vic," said Toppan, jumping up, with a very sweet smile, "we were just talking about your paper-german next Tuesday, and *I* think we might have some very pretty favours made out of white tissue-paper—roses and butterflies, you know."

"This Animal of a Buldy Jones"

"This Animal of a Buldy Jones"

WE could always look for fine fighting at Julien's of a Monday morning, because at that time the model was posed for the week and we picked out the places from which to work. Of course the first ten of the *esquisse* men had first choice. So, no matter how early you got up and how resolutely you held to your first row tabouret, chaps like Rounault, or Marioton, or the little Russian, whom we nicknamed "Choubersky," or Haushaulder, or the big American—"This Animal of a Buldy Jones"—all strong *esquisse* men, could always chuck you out when they came, which they did about ten o'clock, when everything had quieted down. When two particularly big, quick-tempered, obstinate, and combative men try to occupy, simultaneously, a space twelve inches square, it gives rise to complications. We used to watch and wait for these fights (after we had been chucked out ourselves), and make things worse, and

hasten the crises by getting upon the outskirts of the crowd that thronged about the disputants and shoving with all our mights. Then one of the disputants would be jostled rudely against the other, who would hit him in the face, and then there would be a wild hooroosh and a clatter of overturned easels and the flashing of whitened knuckles and glimpses of two fierce red faces over the shoulders of the crowd, and everything would be pleasant. Then, perhaps, you would see an allusion in the Paris edition of the next morning's *"Herald"* to "the brutal and lawless students."

I remember particularly one fight—quite the best I ever saw at Julien's—or elsewhere, for the matter of that. It was between Haushaulder and Gilet. Haushaulder was a Dane, and six feet two. Gilet was French, and had a waist like Virginie's. But Gilet had just come back from his three years' army service, and knew all about the savate. They squared off at each other, Gilet spitting like a cat, and Haushaulder grommelant under his mustache. "This Animal of a Buldy Jones," the big American, bellowed to separate them, for it really looked like a massacre. And then, all at once, Gilet spun around, bent over till his finger-tips touched the floor, and balancing on the toe, lashed out back-

wards with his leg at Haushaulder, like any cayuse. The heel of his boot caught the Dane on the point of the chin. An hour and forty minutes later, when Haushaulder recovered consciousness and tried to speak, we found that the tip of his tongue had been sliced off between his teeth as if by a pair of scissors. It was a really unfortunate affair, and the government very nearly closed the atelier because of it. But "This Animal of a Buldy Jones" gave us all his opinion of the savate, and announced that the next man who savated from any cause whatever *"aurait affaire avec lui, oui, avec lui, cre nom!"*

Heavens! No one *aimerait avoir affaire avec cette animal de* Buldy Jones. He was from Chicago (but, of course, he couldn't help that!), and was taller than even Haushaulder, and much broader. The desire for art had come upon him all of a sudden while he was studying law at Columbia. For "This Animal of a Buldy Jones" had gone into law after leaving Yale. Here we touch his great weakness. He was a Yale man! Why, he was prouder of that fact than he was of being an American, or even a Chicagoan—and that is saying much. Why, he couldn't talk of Yale without his face flushing. Why, Yale was almost

more to him than his mother. I remember, at the students' ball at Bulliers, he got the Americans together, and with infinite trouble taught us all the Yale "yell", which he swore was a transcript from Aristophanes, and for three hours he gravely headed a procession that went the rounds of a hall howling "Brek! Kek! Kek! Kek! Co-ex!" and all the rest of it.

More than that, "This Animal of a Buldy Jones" had pitched on his 'varsity baseball nine. In his studio—quite the swellest in the Quarter, by the way—he had a collection of balls that he had pitched in match games at different times, and he used to show them to us reverently, and if we were his especial friends, would allow us to handle them. They were all written over with names and dates. He would explain them to us one by one.

"This one," he would say, "I pitched in the Princeton game, and here's two I pitched in the Harvard game—hard game that—our catcher gave out—guess he couldn't hold me" (with a grin of pride), "and Harvard made it interesting for me until the fifth inning; then I made two men fan out one after the other, and then, just to show 'em what I could do, filled the bases, got three balls called on me, and then pitched two inshoots and

an outcurve, just as hard as I could deliver. Printz of Harvard was at the bat. He struck at every one of them—and fanned out. Here's the ball I did it with. Yes, sir. Oh, I can pitch a ball all right."

Now think of that! Here was this man, "This Animal of a Buldy Jones," a Beaux Arts man, one of the best colour and line men on our side, who had three *esquisses* and five figures "on the wall" at Julien's (any Paris art student will know what that means), and yet the one thing he was proud of, the one thing he cared to be admired for, the one thing he loved to talk about, was the fact that he had pitched for the Yale 'varsity baseball nine.

All this by way of introduction.

I wonder how many Julien men there are left who remember the *affaire* Camme? Plenty, I make no doubt, for the thing was a monumental character. I heard Roubault tell it at the "Dead Rat" just the other day. "Choubersky" wrote to "The Young Pretender" that he heard it away in the interior of Morocco, where he had gone to paint doorways, and Adler, who is now on the "Century" staff, says it's an old story among the illustrators. It has been bandied about so much that there is danger of its original form being lost. Wherefore

it is time that it should be brought to print.

Now Camme, be it understood, was a filthy little beast—a thorough-paced, blown-in-the-bottle blackguard with not enough self-respect to keep him sweet through a summer's day—a rogue, a bug—anything you like that is sufficiently insulting; besides all this, and perhaps because of it, he was a duelist. He loved to have a man slap his face—some huge, big-boned, big-hearted man, who knew no other weapons but his knuckles. Camme would send him his card the next day, with a message to the effect that it would give him great pleasure to try and kill the gentleman in question at a certain time and place. Then there would be a lot of palaver, and somehow the duel would never come off, and Camme's reputation as a duelist would go up another peg, and the rest of us—beastly little rapins that we were—would hold him in increased fear and increased horror, just as if he were a rattler in coil.

Well, the row began one November morning—a Monday—and, of course, it was over the allotment of seats. Camme had calmly rubbed out the name of "This Animal of a Buldy Jones" from the floor, and had chalked his own in its place.

Now, Bouguereau had placed the *esquisse* of

"This Animal of a Buldy Jones" fifth, the precedence over Camme.

But Camme invented reasons for a different opinion, and presented them to the whole three ateliers at the top of his voice and with unclean allusions. We were all climbing up on the taller stools by this time, and Virginie, who was the model of the week, was making furtive signs at us to give the crowd a push, as was our custom.

Camme was going on at a great rate.

"*Ah, farceur! Ah, espece de volveur, crapaud, va; c'est a moi cette place la Saligaud va te prom'ner, va faire des copies au Louvre.*"

To be told to go and make copies in the Louvre was in our time the last insult. "This Animal of a Buldy Jones," this sometime Yale pitcher, towering above the little frog-like Frenchman, turned to the crowd, and said, in grave concern, his forehead puckered in great deliberation:

"I do not know, precisely, that which it is necessary to do with this kind of a little toad of two legs. I do not know whether I should spank him or administer the good kick of the boot. I believe I shall give him the good kick of the boot. Hein!"

He turned Camme around, held him at arm's length, and kicked him twice severely. Next day,

of course, Camme sent his card, and four of us Americans went around to the studio of "This Animal of a Buldy Jones" to have a smoke-talk over it. Robinson was of the opinion to ignore the matter.

"Now, we can't do that," said Adler; "these beastly continentals would misunderstand. Can you shoot, Buldy Jones?"

"Only deer."

"Fence?"

"Not a little bit. Oh, let's go and punch the wadding out of him, and be done with it!"

"No! No! He should be humiliated."

"I tell you what—let's guy the thing."

"Get up a fake duel and make him seem ridiculous."

"You've got the choice of weapons, Buldy Jones."

"Fight him with hat-pins."

"Oh, let's go punch the wadding out of him—he makes me tired."

"Horse" Wilson, who hadn't spoken, suddenly broke in with:

"Now, listen to me, you other fellows. Let me fix this thing. Buldy Jones, I must be one of your seconds."

"Soit!"

"I'm going to Camme, and say like this: 'This Animal of a Buldy Jones' has the naming of weapons. He comes from a strange country, near the Mississippi, from a place called Shee-ka-go, and there it is not considered etiquette to fight either with a sword or pistol; it is too common. However, when it is necessary that balls should be exchanged in order to satisfy honour, a curious custom is resorted to. Balls are exchanged, but not from pistols. They are very terrible balls, large as an apple, and of adamantine hardness. 'This Animal of a Buldy Jones,' even now has a collection. No American gentleman of honour travels without them. He would gladly have you come and make first choice of a ball while he will select one from among those you leave. *Sur le terrain,* you will deliver these balls simultaneously toward each other, repeating till one or the other adversary drops. Then honour can be declared satisfied."

"Yes, and do you suppose that Camme will listen to such tommy rot as that?" remarked "This Animal of a Buldy Jones." "I think I'd better just punch his head."

"Listen to it? Of course he'll listen to it. You've no idea what curious ideas these continentals have

of the American duel. You can't propose anything so absurd in the dueling line that they won't give it serious thought. And besides, if Camme won't fight this way we'll tell him that you will have a Mexican duel."

"What's that?"

"Tie your left wrists together, and fight with knives in your right hand. That'll scare the tar out of him."

And it did. The seconds had a meeting at the cafe of the *Moulin Rouge,* and gave Camme's seconds the choice of the duel Yale or the duel Mexico. Camme had no wish to tie himself to a man with a knife in his hand, and his seconds came the next day and solemnly chose a league ball—one that had been used against the Havard nine.

Will I—will any of us ever forget that duel? Camme and his people came upon the ground almost at the same time as we. It was behind the mill of Longchamps, of course. Roubault was one of Camme's seconds, and he carried the ball in a lacquered Japanese tobacco-jar—gingerly as if it were a bomb. We were quick getting to work. Camme and "This Animal of a Buldy Jones" were each to take his baseball in his hand, stand back to back, walk away from each other just the distance

between the pitcher's box and the home plate (we had seen to that), turn on the word, and—deliver their balls.

"How do you feel?" I whispered to our principal, as I passed the ball into his hands.

"I feel just as if I was going into a match game, with the bleachers full to the top and the boys hitting her up for Yale. We ought to give the yell, y' know."

"How's the ball?"

"A bit soft and not quite round. Bernard of the Harvard nine hit the shape out of it in a drive over our left field, but it'll do all right."

"This Animal of a Buldy Jones" bent and gathered up a bit of dirt, rubbed the ball in it, and ground it between his palms. The man's arms were veritable connecting-rods, and were strung with tendons like particularly well-seasoned rubber. I remembered what he said about few catchers being able to hold him, and I recalled the pads and masks and wadded gloves of a baseball game, and I began to feel nervous. If Camme was hit on the temple or over the heart—

"Now, say, old man, go slow, you know. We don't want to fetch up in Mazas for this. By the

way, what kind of ball are you going to give him? What's the curve?"

"I don't know yet. Maybe I'll let him have an up-shoot. Never make up my mind till the last moment."

"All ready, gentlemen!" said Roubault, coming up.

Camme had removed coat, vest, and cravat. "This Animal of a Buldy Jones" stripped to a sleeveless undershirt. He spat on his hands, and rubbed a little more dirt on the ball.

"Play ball!" he muttered.

We set them back to back. On the word they paced from each other and paused. "This Animal of a Buldy Jones" shifted his ball to his right hand, and, holding it between his fingers, slowly raised both his arms high above his head and a little over one shoulder. With his toe he made a little depression in the soil, while he slowly turned the ball between his fingers.

"Fire!" cried "Horse" Wilson.

On the word "This Animal of a Buldy Jones" turned abruptly about on one foot, one leg came high off the ground till the knee nearly touched the chest—you know the movement and position well—

the uncanny contortions of a pitcher about to deliver.

Camme threw his ball overhand—bowled it as is done in cricket, and it went wide over our man's shoulder. Down came Buldy Jones' foot, and his arm shot forward with a tremendous jerk. Not till the very last moment did he glance at his adversary or measure the distance.

"It is an in-curve!" exclaimed "Horse" Wilson in my ear.

We could hear the ball whir as it left a grey blurred streak in the air. Camme made as if to dodge it with a short toss of head and neck—it was all he had time for—and the ball, faithful to the last twist of the pitcher's fingers, swerved sharply inward at the same moment and in the same direction.

When we got to Camme and gathered him up, I veritably believed that the fellow had been done for. For he lay as he had fallen, straight as a ramrod and quite as stiff, and his eyes were winking like the shutter of a kinetoscope. But "This Animal of a Buldy Jones," who had seen prize-fighters knocked out by a single blow, said it was all right. An hour later Camme woke up and began to mumble in pain through his clenched teeth, for the ball,

hitting him on the point of the chin, had dislocated his jaw.

The heart-breaking part of the affair came afterward, when "This Animal of a Buldy Jones" kept us groping in the wet grass and underbrush until after dark looking for his confounded baseball, which had caromed off Camme's chin, and gone—no one knows where.

We never found it.

Dying Fires

Dying Fires

YOUNG Overbeck's father was editor and proprietor of the county paper in Colfax, California, and the son, so soon as his high-school days were over, made his appearance in the office as his father's assistant. So abrupt was the transition that his diploma, which was to hang over the editorial desk, had not yet returned from the framer's, while the first copy that he was called on to edit was his own commencement oration on the philosophy of Dante. He had worn a white piqué cravat and a cutaway coat on the occasion of its delivery, and the county commissioner, who was the guest of honour on the platform, had congratulated him as he handed him his sheepskin. For Overbeck was the youngest and the brightest member of his class.

Colfax was a lively town in those days. The teaming from the valley over into the mining country on the other side of the Indian River was at its height then. Colfax was the headquarters of the business, and the teamsters—after the long

pull up from the Indian River Cañon—showed interest in an environment made up chiefly of saloons.

Then there were the mining camps over by Iowa Hill, the Morning Star, the Big Dipper, and further on, up in the Gold Run country, the Little Providence. There was Dutch Flat, full of Mexican-Spanish girls and "breed" girls, where the dance-halls were of equal number with the bars. There was—a little way down the line—Clipper Gap, where the mountain ranches began, and where the mountain cow-boy lived up to the traditions of his kind.

And this life, tumultuous, headstrong, vivid in colour, vigorous in action, was bound together by the railroad, which not only made a single community out of all that part of the east slope of the Sierras' foothills, but contributed its own life as well—the life of oilers, engineers, switchmen, eating-house waitresses and cashiers, "lady" operators, conductors, and the like.

Of such a little world news-items are evolved—sometimes even scare-head, double-leaded descriptive articles—supplemented by interviews with sheriffs and ante-mortem statements. Good grist for a county paper; good opportunities for an

unspoiled, observant, imaginative young fellow at the formative period of his life. Such was the time, such the environment, such the conditions that prevailed when young Overbeck, at the age of twenty-one, sat down to the writing of his first novel.

He completed it in five months, and, though he did not know the fact then, the novel was good. It was not great—far from it, but it was not merely clever. Somehow, by a miracle of good fortune, young Overbeck had got started right at the very beginning. He had not been influenced by a fetich of his choice till his work was a mere replica of some other writer's. He was not literary. He had not much time for books. He lived in the midst of a strenuous, eager life, a little primal even yet; a life of passions that were often elemental in their simplicity and directness. His schooling and his newspaper work—it was he who must find or ferret out the news all along the line, from Penrhyn to Emigrant Gap—had taught him observation without—here was the miracle—dulling the edge of his sensitiveness. He saw, as those few, few people see who live close to life at the beginning of an epoch. He saw into the life and the heart beneath the life; the life and the heart of Bunt

McBride, as with eight horses and much abjuration he negotiated a load of steel "stamps" up the sheer leap of the Indian Cañon; he saw into the life and into the heart of Irma Tejada, who kept case for the faro players at Dutch Flat; he saw into the life and heart of Lizzie Toby, the biscuit-shooter in the railway eating-house, and into the life and heart of "Doc" Twitchel, who had degrees from Edinburgh and Leipsic, and who, for obscure reasons, chose to look after the measles, sprains and rheumatisms of the countryside.

And, besides, there were others and still others, whom young Overbeck learned to know to the very heart's heart of them: blacksmiths, traveling peddlers, section-bosses, miners, horse-wranglers, cow-punchers, the stage-drivers, the storekeeper, the hotel-keeper, the ditch-tender, the prospector, the seamstress of the town, the postmistress, the schoolmistress, the poetess. Into the lives of these and the hearts of these young Overbeck saw, and the wonder of that sight so overpowered him that he had no thought and no care for other people's books. And he was only twenty-one! Only twenty-one, and yet he saw clearly into the great, complicated, confused human machine that clashed and jarred around him. Only twenty-one, and yet

he read the enigma that men of fifty may alone hope to solve! Once in a great while this thing may happen—in such out of the way places as that country around Colfax in Placer County, California, where no outside influences have play, where books are few and misprized and the reading circle a thing unknown. From time to time such men are born, especially along the line of cleavage where the furthest skirmish line of civilisation thrusts and girds at the wilderness. A very few find their true profession before the fire is stamped out of them; of these few, fewer still have the force to make themselves heard. Of these last the majority die before they attain the faculty of making their message intelligible. Those that remain are the world's great men.

At the time when his first little book was on its initial journey to the Eastern publishing houses, Overbeck was by no means a great man. The immaturity that was yet his, the lack of knowledge of his tools, clogged his work and befogged his vision. The smooth running of the cogs and the far-darting range of vision would come in the course of the next fifteen years of unrelenting persistence. The ordering and organising and controlling of his machine he could, with patience and by taking

thought, accomplish for himself. The original impetus had come straight from the almighty gods. That impetus was young yet, feeble, yet, coming down from so far it was spent by the time it reached the earth—at Colfax, California. A touch now might divert it. Judge with what care such a thing should be nursed and watched; compared with the delicacy with which it unfolds, the opening of a rosebud is an abrupt explosion. Later on, such insight, such undeveloped genius may become a tremendous world-power, a thing to split a nation in twain as the axe cleaves the block. But at twenty-one, a whisper—and it takes flight; a touch—it withers; the lifting of a finger—it is gone.

The same destiny that had allowed Overbeck to be born, and that thus far had watched over his course, must have inspired his choice, his very first choice, of a publisher, for the manuscript of "The Vision of Bunt McBride" went straight as a homebound bird to the one man of all others who could understand the beginnings of genius and recognise the golden grain of truth in the chaff of unessentials. His name was Conant, and he accepted the manuscript by telegram.

He did more than this, and one evening Overbeck stood on the steps of the post-office and opened

a letter in his hand, and, looking up and off, saw the world transfigured. His chance had come. In half a year of time he had accomplished what other men—other young writers—strive for throughout the best years of their youth. He had been called to New York. Conant had offered him a minor place on his editorial staff.

Overbeck reached the great city a fortnight later, and the cutaway coat and piqué cravat—unworn since Commencement—served to fortify his courage at the first interview with the man who was to make him—so he believed—famous.

Ah, the delights, the excitement, the inspiration of that day! Let those judge who have striven toward the Great City through years of deferred hope and heart-sinkings and sacrifice daily renewed. Overbeck's feet were set in those streets whose names had become legendary to his imagination. Public buildings and public squares familiar only through the weekly prints defiled before him like a pageant, but friendly for all that, inviting, even. But the vast conglomerate life that roared by his ears, like the systole and diastole of an almighty heart, was for a moment disquieting. Soon the human resemblance faded. It became as a machine infinitely huge, infinitely formidable.

It challenged him with superb condescension.

"I must down you," he muttered, as he made his way toward Conant's, "or you will down me." He saw it clearly. There was no other alternative. The young boy in his foolish finery of a Colfax tailor's make, with no weapons but such wits as the gods had given him, was pitted against the leviathan.

There was no friend nearer than his native state on the other fringe of the continent. He was fearfully alone.

But he was twenty-one. The wits that the gods had given him were good, and the fine fire that was within him, the radiant freshness of his nature, stirred and leaped to life at the challenge. Ah, he would win, he would win! And in his exuberance, the first dim consciousness of his power came to him. He could win, he had it in him; he began to see that now. That nameless power was his which would enable him to grip this monstrous life by the very throat, and bring it down on its knee before him to listen respectfully to what he had to say.

The interview with Conant was no less exhilarating. It was in the reception-room of the great house that it took place, and while waiting

for Conant to come in, Overbeck, his heart in his mouth, recognised, in the original drawings on the walls, picture after picture, signed by famous illustrators, that he had seen reproduced in Conant's magazine.

Then Conant himself had appeared and shaken the young author's hand a long time, and had talked to him with the utmost kindness of his book, of his plans for the immediate future, of the work he would do in the editorial office and of the next novel he wished him to write.

"We'll only need you here in the mornings," said the editor, "and you can put in your afternoons on your novel. Have you anything in mind as good as 'Bunt McBride'?"

"I have a sort of notion for one," hazarded the young man; and Conant had demanded to hear it.

Stammering, embarrassed, Overbeck outlined it.

"I see, I see!" Conant commented. "Yes, there is a good story in that. Maybe Hastings will want to use it in the monthly. But we'll make a book of it, anyway, if you work it up as well as the McBride story."

And so the young fellow made his first step in New York. The very next day he began his second novel.

In the editorial office, where he spent his mornings reading proof and making up "front matter," he made the acquaintance of a middle-aged lady, named Miss Patten, who asked him to call on her, and later on introduced him into the "set" wherein she herself moved. The set called itself the "New Bohemians," and once a week met at Miss Patten's apartment up-town. In a month's time Overbeck was a fixture in "New Bohemia."

It was made up of minor poets whose opportunity in life was the blank space on a magazine page below the end of an article; of men past their prime, who, because of an occasional story in a second-rate monthly, were considered to have "arrived"; of women who translated novels from the Italian and Hungarian; of decayed dramatists who could advance unimpeachable reasons for the non-production of their plays; of novelists whose books were declined by publishers because of professional jealousy on the part of the "readers," or whose ideas, stolen by false friends, had appeared in books that sold by the hundreds of thousands. In public the New Bohemians were fulsome in the praise of one another's productions. Did a sonnet called, perhaps, "A Cryptogram is Stella's Soul"

appear in a current issue, they fell on it with eager eyes, learned it by heart and recited lines of it aloud; the conceit of the lover translating the cipher by the key of love was welcomed with transports of delight.

"Ah, one of the most exquisitely delicate allegories I've ever heard, and so true—so 'in the tone'!"

Did a certain one of the third-rate novelists, reading aloud from his unpublished manuscript, say of his heroine: "It was the native catholicity of his temperament that lent strength and depth to her innate womanliness," the phrase was snapped up on the instant.

"How he understands women!"

"Such *finesse!* More subtle than Henry James."

"Paul Bourget has gone no further," said one of the critics of New Bohemia; "our limitations are determined less by our renunciations than by our sense of proportion in our conception of ethical standards."

The set abased itself. "Wonderful, ah, how pitilessly you fathom our poor human nature!" New Bohemia saw colour in word effects. A poet read aloud:

The stalwart rain!
Ah, the rush of down-toppling waters;
The torrent!
Merge of mist and musky air;
The current
Sweeps thwart my blinded sight again.

"Ah!" exclaimed one of the audience, "see, see that bright green flash!"

Thus in public. In private all was different. Walking home with one or another of the set, young Overbeck heard their confidences.

"Keppler is a good fellow right enough, but, my goodness, he can't write verse!"

"That thing of Miss Patten's to-night! Did you ever hear anything so unconvincing, so obvious? Poor old woman!"

"I'm really sorry for Martens; awfully decent sort, but he never should try to write novels."

By rapid degrees young Overbeck caught the lingo of the third-raters. He could talk about "tendencies" and the "influence of reactions." Such and such a writer had a "sense of form," another a "feeling for word effects." He knew all about "tones" and "notes" and "philistinisms." He could tell the difference between an allegory

and a simile as far as he could see them. An anti-climax was the one unforgivable sin under heaven. A mixed metaphor made him wince, and a split infinitive hurt him like a blow.

But the great word was "convincing." To say a book was convincing was to give positively the last verdict. To be "unconvincing" was to be shut out from the elect. If the New Bohemian decided that the last popular book was unconvincing, there was no appeal. The book was not to be mentioned in polite conversation.

And the author of "The Vision of Bunt McBride," as yet new to the world as the day he was born, with all his eager ambition and quick sensitiveness, thought that all this was the real thing. He had never so much as seen literary people before. How could he know the difference? He honestly believed that New Bohemia was the true literary force of New York. He wrote home that the association with such people, thinkers, poets, philosophers, was an inspiration; that he had learned more in one week in their company than he had learned in Colfax in a whole year.

Perhaps, too, it was the flattery he received that helped to carry Overbeck off his feet. The New Bohemians made a little lion of him when "Bunt

McBride" reached its modest pinnacle of popularity. They kotowed to him, and toadied to him, and fagged and tooted for him, and spoke of his book as a masterpiece. They said he had succeeded where Kipling had ignominiously failed. They said there was more harmony of prose effects in one chapter of "Bunt McBride" than in everything that Bret Harte ever wrote. They told him he was a second Stevenson—only with more refinement.

Then the women of the set, who were of those who did not write, who called themselves "mere dilettantes," but who "took an interest in young writers" and liked to influence their lives and works, began to flutter and buzz around him. They told him that they understood him; that they understood his temperament; that they could see where his forte lay; and they undertook his education.

There was in "The Vision of Bunt McBride" a certain sane and healthy animalism that hurt nobody, and that, no doubt, Overbeck, in later books, would modify. He had taken life as he found it to make his book; it was not his fault that the teamsters, biscuit-shooters and "breed" girls of the foothills were coarse in fibre. In his sincerity he could not do otherwise in his novel than paint life

as he saw it. He had dealt with it honestly; he did not dab at the edge of the business; he had sent his fist straight through it.

But the New Bohemians could not abide this.

"Not so much *faroucherie,* you dear young Lochinvar!" they said. "Art must uplift. 'Look thou not down, but up toward uses of a cup';" and they supplemented the quotation by lines from Walter Pater, and read to him from Ruskin and Matthew Arnold.

Ah, the spiritual was the great thing. We were here to make the world brighter and better for having lived in it. The passions of a waitress in a railway eating-house—how sordid the subject! Dear boy, look for the soul, strive to rise to higher planes! Tread upward; every book should leave a clean taste in the mouth, should tend to make one happier, should elevate, not debase.

So by degrees Overbeck began to see his future in a different light. He began to think that he really had succeeded where Kipling had failed; that he really was Stevenson with more refinement, and that the one and only thing lacking in his work was soul. He believed that he must strive for the spiritual, and "let the ape and tiger die." The

originality and unconventionality of his little book he came to regard as crudities.

"Yes," he said one day to Miss Patten and a couple of his friends, "I have been re-reading my book of late. I can see its limitations—now. It has a lack of form; the tonality is a little false. It fails somehow to convince."

Thus the first Winter passed. In the mornings Overbeck assiduously edited copy and made up front matter on the top floor of the Conant building. In the evenings he called on Miss Patten, or some other member of the set. Once a week, up-town, he fed fat on the literary delicatessen that New Bohemia provided. In the meantime, every afternoon, from luncheon-time till dark, he toiled on his second novel, "Renunciations." The environment of "Renunciations" was a far cry from Colfax, California. It was a city-bred story, with no fresher atmosphere than that of bought flowers. Its *dramatis personae* were all of the leisure class, opera-goers, intriguers, riders of blood horses, certainly more refined than Lizzie Toby, biscuit-shooter, certainly more *spirituelle* than Irma Tejada, case-keeper in Dog Omahone's faro joint, certainly more elegant than Bunt McBride, team-

ster of the Colfax Iowa Hill Freight Transportation Company.

From time to time, as the novel progressed, he read it to the dilettante women whom he knew best among the New Bohemians. They advised him as to its development, and "influenced" its outcome and dénouement.

"I think you have found your *métier,* dear boy," said one of them, when "Renunciations" was nearly completed. "To portray the concrete—is it not a small achievement, sublimated journalese, nothing more? But to grasp abstractions, to analyse a woman's soul, to evoke the spiritual essence in humanity, as you have done in your ninth chapter of 'Renunciations'—that is the true function of art. *Je vous fais mes compliments.* 'Renunciations' is a *chef-d'oeuvre.* Can't you see yourself what a stride you have made, how much broader your outlook has become, how much more catholic, since the days of 'Bunt McBride'?"

To be sure, Overbeck could see it. Ah, he was growing, he was expanding. He was mounting higher planes. He was more—catholic. That, of all words, was the one to express his mood. Catholic, ah, yes, he was catholic!

When "Renunciations" was finished he took the

manuscript to Conant and waited a fortnight in an agony of suspense and repressed jubilation for the great man's verdict. He was all the more anxious to hear it because, every now and then, while writing the story, doubts—distressing, perplexing—had intruded. At times and all of a sudden, after days of the steadiest footing, the surest progress, the story—the whole set and trend of the affair—would seem, as it were, to escape from his control. Where once, in "Bunt McBride," he had gripped, he must now grope. What was it? He had been so sure of himself, with all the stimulus of new surroundings, the work in this second novel should have been all the easier. But the doubt would fade, and for weeks he would plough on, till again, and all unexpectedly, he would find himself in an agony of indecision as to the outcome of some vital pivotal episode of the story. Of two methods of treatment, both equally plausible, he could not say which was the true, which the false; and he must needs take, as it were, a leap in the dark—it was either that or abandoning the story, trusting to mere luck that he would, somehow, be carried through.

A fortnight after he had delivered the manu-

script to Conant he presented himself in the publisher's office.

"I was just about to send for you," said Conant. "I finished your story last week."

There was a pause. Overbeck settled himself comfortably in his chair, but his nails were cutting his palms.

"Hastings has read it, too—and—well, frankly, Overbeck, we were disappointed."

"Yes?" inquired Overbeck, calmly. "H'm—that's too b-bad."

He could not hear, or at least could not understand, just what the publisher said next. Then, after a time that seemed immeasurably long, he caught the words:

"It would not do you a bit of good, my boy, to have us publish it—it would harm you. There are a good many things I would lie about, but books are not included. This 'Renunciations' of yours is—is, why, confound it, Overbeck, it's foolishness."

Overbeck went out and sat on a bench in a square near by, looking vacantly at a fountain as it rose and fell and rose again with an incessant cadenced splashing. Then he took himself home to his hall bedroom. He had brought the manu-

script of his novel with him, and for a long time he sat at his table listlessly turning the leaves, confused, stupid, all but inert. The end, however, did not come suddenly. A few weeks later "Renunciations" was published, but not by Conant. It bore the imprint of an obscure firm in Boston. The covers were of limp dressed leather, olive green, and could be tied together by thongs, like a portfolio. The sale stopped after five hundred copies had been ordered, and the real critics, those who did not belong to New Bohemia, hardly so much as noticed the book.

In the Autumn, when the third-raters had come back from their vacations, the "evenings" at Miss Patten's were resumed, and Overbeck hurried to the very first meeting. He wanted to talk it all over with them. In his chagrin and cruel disappointment he was hungry for some word of praise, of condolement. He wanted to be told again, even though he had begun to suspect many things, that he had succeeded where Kipling had failed, that he was Stevenson with more refinement.

But the New Bohemians, the same women and fakirs and half-baked minor poets who had "influenced" him and had ruined him, could hardly find time to notice him now. The guest of the

evening was a new little lion who had joined the set. A symbolist versifier who wrote over the pseudonym of de la Houssaye, with black, oily hair and long white hands; him the Bohemians thronged about in crowds as before they had thronged about Overbeck. Only once did any one of them pay attention to the latter. This was the woman who had nicknamed him "Young Lochinvar." Yes, she had read "Renunciations," a capital little thing, a little thin in parts, lacking in *finesse*. He must strive for his true medium of expression, his true note. Ah, art was long! Study of the new symbolists would help him. She would beg him to read Monsieur de la Houssaye's "The Monoliths." Such subtlety, such delicious word-chords! It could not fail to inspire him.

Shouldered off, forgotten, the young fellow crept back to his little hall bedroom and sat down to think it over. There in the dark of the night his eyes were opened, and he saw, at last, what these people had done to him; saw the Great Mistake, and that he had wasted his substance.

The golden apples, that had been his for the stretching of the hand, he had flung from him. Tricked, trapped, exploited, he had prostituted the great good thing that had been his by right divine, for the privilege of eating husks with swine. Now

was the day of the mighty famine, and the starved and broken heart of him, crying out for help, found only a farrago of empty phrases.

He tried to go back; he did in very fact go back to the mountains and the cañons of the great Sierras. "He arose and went to his father," and, with such sapped and broken strength as New Bohemia had left him, strove to wrest some wreckage from the dying fire.

But the ashes were cold by now. The fire that the gods had allowed him to snatch, because he was humble and pure and clean and brave, had been stamped out beneath the feet of minor and dilettante poets, and now the gods guarded close the brands that yet remained on the altars.

They may not be violated twice, those sacred fires. Once in a lifetime the very young and the pure in heart may see the shine of them and pluck a brand from the altar's edge. But, once possessed, it must be watched with a greater vigilance than even that of the gods, for its light will live only for him who snatched it first. Only for him that shields it, even with his life, from the contact of the world does it burst into a burning and a shining light. Let once the touch of alien fingers disturb it, and there remains only a little heap of bitter ashes.

Grettir at Drangey

Grettir at Drangey

I

HOW GRETTIR CAME TO THE ISLAND

A LONG slant of rain came from out the northwest, and much fog; and the sea, still swollen by the last of the winter gales—now two days gone—raced by the bows of their boat in great swells, quiet, huge.

It was cold, and the wind, like a hound at fault, hunted along through the gorges between the wave heads, casting back and forth swiftly in bulging, sounding blasts that made an echo between the walls of water. At times the wind discovered the boat and leaped upon it suddenly with a gush of fierce noise, clutching at the sail and bearing it down as the dog bears down the young elk.

The sky, a vast reach of broken grey, slid along close overhead, sometimes even dropping flat upon the sea, blotting the horizon and whirling about like geyser mist or the reek and smoke from the

mouth of *jokuls*. Then, perhaps, out of the fog and out of the rain, suddenly great and fearful came towering and dipping a mighty berg, the waves breaking like surf about its base, spires of grey ice lifting skywards, all dripping and gashed and jagged; knobs and sharp ridges thrusting from under beneath the water, full of danger to ships. At such moments they must put the helm over quickly, sheering off from the colossus before it caught and trampled them.

But no living thing did they see through all the day. Sea birds there were none; no porpoises played about the boat, no seals barked from surge to surge. There was nothing but the silent gallop of the waves, the flitting of the leaden sky, the uneven panting of the wind, and the rattle of the rain on the half-frozen sail. The sea was very lonely, barren, empty of all life.

Towards the middle of the day, when Iceland lay far behind them,—a bar of black on the ocean's edge,—they were little by little aware of the roll and thunder of breakers, and the cries and calls of very many sea birds and—very faint—the bleating of sheep. The fog and the scud of rain and the spindrift that the wind whipped from off the wave-tops shut out all sight beyond the cast of a spear.

But they knew that they must be driving hard upon the island, and Grettir, from his place at the helm, bent himself to look under the curve of the sail. He called to Illugi, his brother, and to Noise, the thrall, who stood peering at the bows of the boat (their eyes made small to pierce the mist), to know if they saw aught of the island.

"I see," answered Illugi, "only wrack and drift of wreck and streamers of kelp, but we are close upon it."

Then all at once Grettir threw the boat up into the wind, and shouted aloud:

"Look overhead! Quick! Above there! We are indeed close."

And for all that the foot and mid-most part of the island were unseen because of the mist, there, far above them, between sea and sky, looming, as it were, out of heaven, rose suddenly the front of the cliff, rearing the forehead of it, high from out all that din of surf and swirl of mist and rain, bare to the buffet of storms, iron-strong, everlasting, a mighty rock.

They lowered the sail and ran out the sweeps, and for an hour skirted the edge of the island searching for the landing-place, where the rope-ladder hung from the cliff's edge. When they

had found it, they turned the nose of the boat landward, and, caught by the set of the surf, were drawn inwards, and at last flung up on the beaches. Waist-deep in the icy undertow, they ran the boat up and made her fast, rejoicing that they had won to land without ill-fortune.

The wind for an instant tore in twain the veils of fog, and they saw the black cliff towering above them, as well as the ladder that hung from its summit clattering against the rock as the wind dashed it to and fro, and as they turned from the boat to look about them, lo, at their feet, stranded at make of the ebb, a great walrus, crushed between two ice-floes, lay dead, the rime of the frost encrusting its barbels.

So Grettir Asmundson, called The Strong, outlawed throughout Iceland, came with his brother Illugi, and the thrall Noise, to live on the Island of Drangey.

II

HOW GRETTIR AND ILLUGI HIS BROTHER KEPT THE ISLAND

On top of the cliff (to be reached only by climbing the rope-ladder) were sheep-walks, where the shepherds from the mainland kept their flocks. Grettir and Illugi took over these, for food and for the sake of their pelts which were to make them coverings. They built themselves a house out of the driftwood that came ashore at the foot of the cliff with every tide, and throughout the rest of the winter days lived in peace.

But in the early spring a fisherman carried the news to the mainland that he had seen men on the top of Drangey, and that the ladder was up.

Forthwith came the farmers and shepherds in their boats to know if such were the truth. They found, indeed, the ladder up, and after calling and shouting a long time time, brought the hero and his brother to the cliff's edge.

"What now?" they cried. "Give a reckoning of our sheep. Is it peace or war between you and

us? Why have you come to our island? Answer, Grettir—outlaw."

"What I have, I hold," called Grettir. "Outlawed I am, indeed, and no man is there in all Iceland that dare help me to home or hiding. Mine is the Island of Drangey, and mine are the sheep and the goats."

"Robber!" shouted the shepherds, "since when have you bought the island? Show the title."

For answer Grettir drew his sword from its sheath, and held it high.

"That is my title," he cried. "When that you shall take from me, the Island of Drangey is yours again."

"At least render up our sheep," answered the shepherds.

"What I have said, I have said!" cried Grettir, and with that he and Illugi drew back from the cliff's edge and were no more seen.

The shepherds sailed back to the mainland, and could think of no way of ridding the island of Grettir and his brother.

The summer waned, and finding themselves no further along than at the beginning, they struck hands with a certain Thorbjorn, called The Hook, and sold him their several claims.

So it came about that Thorbjorn the Hook was also an enemy of Grettir, for he swore that foul or fair, ill or well, he would have the head of the hero, and the price that was upon it, as well as the sheepwalks and herds of Drangey.

This Thorbjorn had an old foster-mother named Thurid, who, although the law of Christ had long since prevailed through all the country, still made witchcraft, and by this means promised The Hook that he should have the island, and with it the heads of Illugi and Grettir. She herself was a mumbling, fumbling carline of a sour spirit and fierce temper. Once when The Hook and his brother were at tail-game, she, looking over his shoulder, taunted him because he had made a bad move. On his answering in surly fashion, she caught up one of the pieces, and drove the tail of it so fiercely against his eye that the ball had started from the socket. He had sprung up with a mighty oath, and dealt her so strong a blow that she had taken to her bed a month, and thereafterward must walk with a stick. There was no love lost between the two.

Meanwhile, Grettir and Illugi lived in peace upon the top of Drangey. Illugi was younger than the hero; a fine lad with yellow hair and blue eyes. The brothers loved each other, and could

not walk or sit together, but that the arm of one was about the shoulder of the other. The lad knew very well that neither he nor Grettir would ever leave Drangey alive; but in spite of that he abode on the island, and was happy in the love and comradeship of his older brother. As for Grettir, hunted and hustled from Norway to Skaptar Jokul, he could trust Illugi only. The thrall Noise was meet for little but to gather driftwood to feed the fire. But Illugi, of all men in the world, Grettir had chosen to stay at his side in this, the last stand of his life, and to bear him company in the night when he waked and was afraid.

For the weird that the Vampire had laid upon Grettir, when he had fought with him through the night at Thorhall-stead, lay heavy upon him. As the Vampire had said, his strength was never greater than at the moment when, spent and weary with the grapple, he had turned the monster under him; and, moreover, as the dead man had foretold, the eyes of him—the sightless, lightless dead eyes of him—grew out of the darkness in the late watches of the night, and stared at Grettir whichever way he turned.

For a long time all went well with the two. Bleak though it was, the brothers grew to love the

Island of Drangey. Not all the days were so bitter as the one that witnessed their arrival. Throughout the summer—when the daylight lengthened and lengthened, till at last the sun never set at all—the weather held fair. The crust of soil on the top of the great rock grew green and brilliant with gorse and moss and manzel-wursel. Blackberries flourished on southern exposures and in crevices between the bowlders, and wild thyme and heather bloomed and billowed in the sea wind.

Day after day the brothers walked the edge of the cliff, making the rounds of the snares they had set for sea fowl. Day after day, descending to the beaches, they fished in the offing or with ready spears crept from rock to rock, stalking the great bull-walruses that made the land to sun themselves. Day after day in a cloudless sky the sun shone; day after day the sea, deep blue, coruscated and flashed in his light; day after day the wind blew free, the flowers spread, and the surf shouted hoarsely on the beaches, and the sea fowl clamoured, cried, and rose and fell in glinting hordes. The air was full of the fine, clean aroma of the ocean, even the perfume of the flowers was crossed with a tang of salt, and the seaweed at low tide

threw off, under the heat of the sun, a warm, sweet redolence of its own.

It was a brave life. They were no man's men. The lonely, rock-ribbed island, the grass, the growths of green, the blue sea, and the blessed sunlight were their friends, their helpers; they held what of the world they saw in fief. They made songs to the morning, and sang them on the cliff's edge, looking off over the sea beneath, standing on a point of rock, the wind in their faces, the taste of salt in their mouths, their long braids of yellow hair streaming from their foreheads.

They made songs to their swords, and swung the ponderous blades in cadence as they sang—wild, unrhymed, metrical chants, monotonous, turning upon but few notes; savage songs, full of man-slayings and death-fights against great odds, shouted out in deep-toned, male voices, there, far above the world, on that airy, wind-swept, lonely rock. A brave life!

The end they knew must come betimes. They were in nowise afraid. They made a song to their death—the song they would sing when they had turned Berserk in the crash of swords, when the great grey blades were rising and falling, death,

like lightning, leaping from their edges; when shield rasped shield, and the spears sank home and wrenched out the life in a spurt of scarlet, and the massive axes rang upon helmet and hauberk, and men, heroes all, met death with a cheer, and went out into the Dark with a shout. A brave life!

III

OF THE WEIRD OF THURID, FOSTER-MOTHER TO THORBJORN HOOK

Twice during that summer The Hook made attempts to secure the island. Once he sailed over to Drangey, and standing up in the prow of his boat near the beach, close by where the ladder hung, talked long with Grettir, who came to the rim of the cliff in answer to his shouts. He promised the Outlaw (so only that he would yield up the island) full possession of half the sheep that yet remained and a free passage in one of his ships to any port within fifty leagues. But the hero had but one answer to all persuadings.

"Drangey is mine," he said. "There is no rede whereby you can get me hence. Here do I bide, whatso may come to hand, to the day of my death and my undoing," and The Hook must sail home in evil mind, gnawing his nails in his fury, and vowing that he would yet gain the island and lay Grettir to earth, and get the best out of the bad bargain he had made.

Another time The Hook hired a man named

Hœring, a great climber, to try, by night, to scale the hinder side of Drangey where the cliff was not so bold. But halfway up the man lost either his wits or his footing, for he fell dreadfully upon the rocks far below, and brake the neck of him, so that the spine drave through the skin.

And after that, certainly Grettir and Illugi were let alone. The fame of them and of their seizure of Drangey and the blood feud between them and Thorbjorn, called The Hook, went wide through all that part of Iceland, and many the man that put off from the mainland and sailed to the island, just to hail the Outlaw, at the head of the ladder, and wish him well. Thus the summer and the next winter passed.

At about the break-up of the winter night, The Hook began to importune his foster-mother, Thurid, that she should make good her promise as to the winning of Grettir. At last she said: "If you are to have my rede, I must have my will. Strike hands with my hand then, and swear to me to do those things that I shall say." And The Hook struck hands and sware the oath.

Then, though he was loath to visit the island again, she bade him man an eight-oared boat and flit her out to Drangey.

When they had reached the island, and after much shouting had brought Grettir and Illugi to the edge of the rock, Thorbjorn again renewed his offer, saying further that if there were now but few sheep left upon the island, he would add a bag of silver pennies to make the difference good.

"Bootless be your quest," answered Grettir. "Wot this well. What I have said, I have said. My bones shall rot upon Drangey ere I set foot on other soil."

But at his words the carline, who till now had sat huddled in rags and warps in the bow of the boat, stirred herself and screamed out:

"An ill word for a fair offer. The wits are out of these men that they may not know the face of their good fortune, and upon an evil time have they put their weal from them. Now this I cast over thee, Grettir; that thou be left of all health and good-hap, all good heed and wisdom, and that the longer ye live the less shall be thy luck. Good hope have I, Grettir, that thy days of gladness shall be fewer in time to come than in time gone by."

And at the words behold, Grettir the Strong, whose might no two men could master, staggered as though struck, and then a rage came upon him, and

plucking up a stone from the earth, he flung it at the heap of rags in the boat, so that it fell upon the hag's leg and brake it.

"An evil deed, brother," said Illugi. "Surely no good will come of that."

"Nor none from the words of that hell-cat yonder," answered Grettir. "Not over-much were-gild were paid for us, though the price should be one carline's life."

The Hook sailed back to the mainland after this, and sat at home while the leg of his foster-mother mended. But when she was able to walk again, she bade him lead her forth upon the shore. For a time she hobbled up and down till she had found a piece of driftwood to her liking. She turned it over, now upon this side, now upon that, mumbling to herself the while, till The Hook, puzzled, said:

"What work ye there, foster-mother?"

"The bane of Grettir," answered the witch, and with that she crouched herself down by the log and cut runes upon it. Then she stood upright and walked backwards about the log, and went widdershins around it, and then, after carving more runes, bade Thorbjorn cast it into the sea.

The Hook scoffed and jeered, but, mindful of his

oath, set the log adrift. Now the flood tide made strongly at the time, and the wind set from off the ocean.

"It will come to shore," he said.

"Ay, that I hope," said the witch; "to the shore of Drangey."

On the beaches, where the torn scum and froth of the waves shuddered and tumbled to and fro in the wind, The Hook and the old witch stood watching. Thrice the surf flung the log landward, thrice the undertow sucked it back. It was carried under the curve of a great hissing comber, disappeared, then rose dripping on the far side. The hag, bent upon her crutch, her toothless jaws fumbling and working, her gray hair streaming in the wind, fixed a glittering eye, malevolent, iniquitous, far out to sea where Drangey showed itself, a block of misty blue over the horizon's edge.

"A strong spell for a strong man," she muttered, "and an ill curse for an evil deed. Blighted be the breasts that sucked ye, and black and bitter the bread ye eat. Look thou now, foster-son," she cried, raising her voice.

The Hook crossed himself, and his head crouched fearfully between his shoulders. Under

his bent brows the glance of him shot uneasily from side to side.

"A bad business," he whispered, and he trembled as he spoke. For the log was riding the waves like a skiff, headed seawards, making way against tide and wind, veering now east, now west, but in the main working steadily toward Drangey. "A bad business, and peril of thy life is toward if the deed thou hast done this day be told of at Thingvalla."

IV

THE NIGHT-FLITTING OF THORBJORN HOOK

By candle-lighting time that day the storm had reached such a pitch and so mighty was the fury and noise raging across the top of Drangey, that Grettir and Illugi must needs put their lips to one another's ears when they spoke. There was no rain as yet, and the wind that held straight as an arrow's flight over the ocean, had blown away all mists and clouds, so that the atmosphere was of an ominous clearness, and the coasts of Iceland showed livid white against the purple black of the sky.

There were strange sounds about: the prolonged alarums of the gale; blast trumpeting to blast all through the hollow upper spaces of the air; the metallic slithering of the frozen grasses, writhing and tormented; the minute whistle of driving sand; the majestic diapason of the breakers, and the wild piping of bewildered sea-mews and black swans, as, helpless in the sudden gusts, they drove past, close overhead with slanted wings stretched tense and taut.

Towards evening Grettir and Illugi regained the hut, their bodies bent and inclined against the wind. They bore between them the carcass of a slaughtered sheep, the last on the island, for by now they had killed and eaten all of the herd, with the exception of one old ram, whom they had spared because of his tameness. This one followed the brothers about like a dog, and each night came to the door of the hut and butted against it till he was allowed to come in.

Earlier in the day Grettir, foreseeing that the weather would be hard, had sent Noise, the servant, to gather in a greater supply of drift. The thrall now met the brothers at the door of the hut, staggering under the weight of a great log. He threw his burden down at Grettir's feet and spoke surlily, for he was but little pleased with his lot:

"There be that which I hold will warm you enough. Hew it now yourself, for I am spent with the toil of getting it in on such a night as this."

But as Grettir heaved up the axe, Illugi sprang forward with a hand outstretched and a warning cry. He had glanced at the balk of drift, and had seen it to be one that Grettir had twice discarded, suspicious of the runes that he saw were cut into it. Even Noise had been warned and for-

bidden to bring it to the hut. Doubtless on this day the thrall had found it close by the foot of the ladder, and being too slothful and too ill-tempered to seek farther, had fetched it in despite of Grettir's commands.

"Brother," cried Illugi, "have a heed what ye do!"

But he spoke too late. Grettir hewed strong upon the balk, and the axe flipped from it and drave into his leg below the knee, so that the blade hung in the bone. Grettir flung down the axe, and staggered into the hut and sank upon the bed.

"Ill-luck is to us-ward," he cried, "and now wot I well that my death is upon me. For no good thing was this drift-timber sent thrice to us. Noise, evilly hast thou done, and ill hast thou served us. Go now and draw the ladder, and let thy faithful service henceforth make good the ill-turn thou hast done me to-day." And with the words the brothers drove him out into the night.

Grumbling, the thrall made his way to the ladder-head, and sat down cursing.

"A fine life," he muttered, "hounded like a house-carle from dawn to dark. Because the son of Asmund swings awkwardly his axe and notches the skin of him, I must be driven from house and

hearthstone on so hard a night as this. Draw the ladder! Ay, draw the ladder, says he. By God! it were no man's deed to risk whether he could win to the island in such a storm as this."

For all that, he made at least one attempt to draw the ladder up. But it was heavy, and the wind, thrashing it to and fro, made it hard to manage. Noise soon gave over, and, out of spite refusing to return to the hut, drew his cloak over his head, and crawling in behind a bowlder addressed himself to sleep. He was awakened by a blow.

He sprang up. The night was overcast; it had been raining; his cloak was drenched. Men were there; dark figures crowding together, whispering. There was a click and clash of steel, and against the pale blur of the sky he saw, silhouetted, the moving head of a spear. Again some one struck him. He wrenched about terrified, and a score of hands gripped him close, while at his throat sprang the clutch of fingers iron-strong. Then a voice:

"Fool, and son of a fool, and worse than a fool! It is I, Thorbjorn, called The Hook. Speak as he should speak who is nigh to death, true words and few words. What of Grettir?"

"Sore bestead," Noise made shift to answer, through the grip upon his throat. "Crippled with his own axe as he hewed upon a log of firewood but this very day. Down upon his back he is, and none to stand at his side, when the need is on him, but the boy Illugi."

"A log, say you?" whispered The Hook. Then turning to a comrade: "Mark you that, Hialfi Thinbeard."

"A log cut with runes," insisted Noise.

"Ay, with runes," repeated The Hook. "With runes, I say, Hialfi Thinbeard. My mind misgave me when the carline urged this flitting to-night, and only for my oath's sake I would have foregone it. But an old she-goat knows the shortest path to the byre. As for you"—he turned to Noise: "Grettir is mine enemy, and the feud of blood lies between us, but he deserves a better thrall than so foul a bird as thou."

Thereat he gave the word, and his carles set upon Noise and beat him till no breath was left in his body. Then they bound him hand and foot, and dragged him behind a rock, and left him.

Noise watched them as they drew to one side and whispered together. There were at least twenty of them. For a long moment they conferred together

in low voices, while the wind shrilled fiercely in the cluster of their spear-blades. Then there was a movement. The group broke up. Silently and with cautious steps the dark figures of the men moved off in the direction of the hut. Twice, as The Hook gave the word, they halted to listen. Then they moved on again. They disappeared. A pebble clicked under foot, a sword struck faintly against a rock.

There was no more sound. The rain urged by the wind held steadily across the top of the Island of Drangey. It wanted about three hours till dawn.

V

OF THE MAN-SLAYING ON DRANGEY

In the hut, his head upon his brother's lap, Grettir lay tossing with pain. From the thigh down the leg was useless, and from the thigh down it throbbed with anguish, yet the Outlaw gave no sign of his sufferings, and even to speed the slow passing of the night had sung aloud.

It was a song of the old days, when all men were friendly to him, when he was known as Grettir Asmundson and not Grettir the Outlaw; and as he sang, his mind went back through the years of all that wild, troubled life of his, and he remembered many things. Back again in the old home at Biarg, free and happy once more he saw himself as he should have been, head of his mother's household, his foot upon his own hearthstone, his head under his own rooftree. And there should be no more foes to fight, and no more hiding and night-riding; no noontime danger to be faced down; no enemies that struck in the dark to be baffled. And he would be free again; he would be among his fellows; he would touch the hand of friends, would

know the companionship of brave and honest men and the love of good and honest women. Would it all be his again some day? Would the old, old times come back again? Would there ever be a home-coming for him? Fighter though he was, a hero and a warrior, and though battles and man-slayings more than he could count had been his portion, even though the shock of swords was music to him, there were other things that made life glad. The hand the sword-hilt had calloused could yet remember the touch of a maiden's fingers, and at times, such as this, strange thoughts grew with a strange murmuring in his brain. He was a young man yet; could he but make head against his enemies and his untoward fortune till the sentence of outlawry was overpassed, he might yet begin his life all new again. A wife should be his, and a son should be born to him—a little son to watch at play, to love, to cherish, to boast of, to be proud of, to laugh over, to weep over, to be held against that mighty breast of his, to be enfolded ever so gently in those mighty sword-scarred arms of his. Strange thoughts; strange, indeed, for a wounded outlaw, on that storm-swept, barren rock in the dark, dark hours before the dawn.

"I think," said Grettir after a while, "that now I may sleep a little."

Illugi made him comfortable upon the sheep-pelts, and put his rolled-up cloak under his head; then, when Grettir had closed his eyes, put a new log upon the fire and sat down nigh at hand.

Long time the lad sat thus watching his brother's face as sleep smoothed from it the lines of pain; as the lips under the long, blond mustaches relaxed a little, and the frown went from the forehead.

It was a kindly face, after all; none of the harshness in it, none of the fierceness in it that so bitter a life as his should have stamped it with—a kindly face, serious, grave even, the face of a big-hearted, generous fellow who bore no malice, who feared no evil, who uttered no complaint, and who looked fate fearless between the eyes.

Something shocked heavily at the door of the hut, and the Outlaw stirred uneasily, and his blue eyes opened a little.

"It is only the old ram, brother," said Illugi. "He butts hard to get in."

"Hard and over hard," muttered Grettir, and as he spoke the door split in twain, and the firelight flashed upon the face of Thorbjorn Hook.

Instantly Illugi was on his feet, his spear in

hand. It had come at last, the end of everything. Fate at last was knocking at the door. Grettir was to fight the Last Fight there in that narrow hut, there on that night of storm, in the rain and under the scudding clouds.

Behind him, as he stood facing the riven door and the men that were crowding into the doorway, he heard Grettir struggling to his feet. The fire flared and smoked in the wind, and the rain, as it swept in from without, hissed as it fell among the hot embers. From far down on the beaches came the booming of the surf.

The onset hung poised. After that first splintering of the door The Hook and his men made no move. No man spoke. Illugi, his spear held ready, was a statue in the midst of the hut; Grettir, upon one knee, with his great sword in his fist, one hand holding by Illugi's belt, did not move. His eyes, steady, earnest, were upon those of The Hook, and the two men held each other's glances for a moment that seemed immeasurably long. Then at last:

"Who showed thee the way hither?" said Grettir quietly.

"God showed us the way," The Hook made answer.

"Nay, nay, it was the hag, thy foster-mother."

But the sound of voices broke the spell. In an instant the great fight—the fight that would be told of in Iceland for hundreds of years to come—burst suddenly forth like the bursting of a dyke. Illugi had leaped forward, and through the smoke of the weltering fire his spear-blade flashed, curving like the curving leap of a salmon in the rapids of the Jokulsa. There was a cry, a rush of many feet, a parting of the group in the doorway, and Hialfi Thinbeard's hands shut their death-grip upon the shaft of Illugi's spear as the blade of it tore out between his shoulders.

But now men were upon the roof—Karr, son of Karr, thrall of Tongue-stone, Vikaar and Haldarr of the household of Eirik of Good-dale, Hafr of Meadness in the Fleets and Thorwald of Hegra-ness—tearing away the thatch and thrusting madly downward with sword and spear. Illugi dropped the haft of the weapon that had slain Hialfi, and catching up another one, made as if to drive it through the hatch. But even as he did so the whole roof cracked and sagged; then it gave way at one corner, and Karr, son of Karr, fell headlong from above. Grettir caught him on his sword-point as he fell, and at the same moment The Hook drave

a small boar-spear clean through Illugi's head.

And from that moment all semblance of consecutive action was lost. Yelling, shouting, groaning, cursing, the men rushed together in one blurred and furious grapple. The wrecked hut collapsed, crashing upon their heads; the fire, kicked and trampled as the fight raged back and forth, caught the thatch and sheep-pelts, and flamed up fiercely in and around the combat. They fought literally in fire—in fire and thick smoke and driving rain. The arms that thrust with spear or hewed with sword rose and fell all ablaze. Those who fell, fell among hot coals and fought their fellows—their own friends—to make way that they might escape the torment.

Twice Grettir, dying though he was, flung the fight from him and rose to his full height, a dreadful figure, alone for an instant, bloody, dripping, charred with ashes, half naked, his clothes all burning; and twice again they flung themselves upon him, and bore him down, so that he disappeared beneath their mass. And ever and again from out the swirl of the onset, from that unspeakable jam of men, mad with the battle-madness that was upon them, crawled out some horrid figure, staggering, gashed, and maimed, or even dying, done to death by the

great Outlaw in the last fight of his life. Thorfin, Gamli's man, had both arms broken at the very shoulders; Krolf of Drontheim reeled back from the battle with a sword-thrust through his hip that made him go on crutches the rest of his life; Kolbein, churl of Svein, died two days later of a spear-thrust through the bowels; Ognund, Hakon's son, never was able to use his right arm after that night.

Hardly a man of all the twenty that did not for all the rest of his life bear upon his body the marks of Grettir's death-fight. Still Grettir bore up. He had with one arm caught Thorir, The Hook's stoutest house-carle, around the throat, while his other arm, that wielded his sword, hewed and hewed and smote and thrust as though it would never tire. Even above the din of the others rose the clamour of Thorir's agony. Once again Grettir cleared a space around him, and stood with dripping sword, his left arm still crushing Thorir in that awful embrace. Thorir was weaponless, his face purple. No thought of battle was left in him, and frantic, he stretched out a hand to his fellows, his voice a wail:

"Help me, Thorbjorn. He is killing me. For Christ's sake——"

And Grettir's blade nailed the words within his throat. The wretch slid to the ground doubled in a heap, the blood gushing from his mouth.

Then those that yet remained alive, drawn off a little, panting, spent, saw a terrible sight—the death of Grettir.

For a moment in that flicker of fire he seemed to grow larger. Alone, unassailable, erect among those heaps of dead and dying enemies, his stature seemed as it were suddenly to increase. He towered above them, his head in swirls of smoke, the great bare shoulders gleaming with his blood, the long braids of yellow hair soaked with it. Awful, gigantic, suddenly a demi-god, he stood colossal, a man made more than human. The eyes of him fixed, wide open, looked out into the darkness above their heads, unwinking, unafraid—looked into the darkness and into the eyes of Death, unafraid, unshaken.

There he stood already dead, yet still upon his feet, rigid as iron, his back unbent, his neck proud; while they cowered before him holding their breaths waiting, watching. Then, like a mighty pine tree, stiff, unbending, he swayed slowly forward. Stiff as a sword-blade the great body leaned over farther and farther; slowly at first, then with

increased momentum inclined swiftly earthward. He fell, and they could believe that the crash of that fall shook the earth beneath their feet. He died as he would have wished to die, in battle, his harness on, his sword in his grip. He lay face downward amid the dead ashes of the trampled fire and moved no more.

The Guest of Honour

The Guest of Honour

PART ONE

THE doctor shut and locked his desk drawer upon his memorandum book with his right hand, and extended the left to his friend Manning Verrill, with the remark:

"Well, Manning, how are you?"

"If I were well, Henry," answered Verrill gravely, "I would not be here."

The doctor leaned back in his deep leather chair, and having carefully adjusted his glasses, tilted back his head, and looked at Verrill from beneath them. He waited for him to continue.

"It's my nerves—I *suppose*," began Verrill. "Henry," he declared suddenly leaning forward, "Henry, I'm scared; that's what's the matter with me—I'm scared."

"Scared," echoed the doctor, "What nonsense! What of?"

"Scared of death, Henry," broke out Verrill, "scared *blue!*"

"It is your nerves," murmured the doctor. "You need travel and a bromide, my boy. There's nothing the matter with you. Why, you're good for another forty years,—yes, or even for another fifty years. You're sound as a nut. You, to talk about death!"

"I've seen thirty—twenty-nine I should say, twenty-nine of my best friends go."

The doctor looked puzzled a moment; then —"Oh! you mean that club of yours," said he.

"Yes," said Verrill, "Great heavens! to think that I should be the last man after all—well, one of us had to be the last. And that's where the trouble is, Henry. It's been growing on me for the last two years—ever since Curtice died. He was the twenty-sixth. And he died only a month before the Annual Dinner. Arnold, Brill, Steve,—Steve Sharrett, you know, and I—just the four,—were left then; and we sat down to that big table alone; and when we came to the toast of 'The Absent Ones' . . . Well, Henry, we were pretty solemn before we got through. And we knew that the choice of the last man,—who would face those

thirty-one empty covers and open the bottle of wine that we all set aside at our first dinner, and drink 'The Absent Ones,'—was narrowing down pretty fine.

"Next year there were only Arnold and Steve, and myself left. Brill—well you know all about his death. The three of us got through dinner somehow. The year after that we were still three, and even the year after that. Then poor old Steve went down with the *Dreibund* in the bay of Biscay, and four months afterward Arnold and I sat down to the table at the Annual, alone. I'm not going to forget that evening in a hurry. Why, Henry—oh! never mind. Then—"

"Well," prompted the doctor as his friend paused:

"Arnold died three months ago. And the day of our Annual—I mean my—the club's," Verrill changed his position. "The date of the dinner, the Annual Dinner, is next month, and I'm the only one left."

"And, of course, you'll not go," declared the doctor.

"Oh, yes," said Verrill. "Yes, I will go, of course. But—" He shook his head with a long sigh. "When the Last Man Club was organised,"

he went on, "in '68, we were all more or less young. It was a great idea, at least I felt that way about it, but I didn't believe that thirty young men would persist in anything—of that sort very long. But no member of the club died for the first five years, and the club met every year and had its dinner without much thought of—of consequences, and of the inevitable. We met just to be sociable."

"Hold on," interrupted the doctor, "you are speaking now of thirty. A while ago you said thirty-one."

"Yes, I know," assented Verrill, "There were thirty in the club, but we always placed an extra cover—for—for the Guest of Honour."

The doctor made a movement of impatience: Then in a moment, "Well," he said, resignedly, "go on."

"That's about the essentials," answered Verrill. "The first death was in '73. And from that year on the vacant places at the table have steadily increased. Little by little the original bravado of the thing dropped out of it all for me; and of late years—well I have told you how it is. I've seen so many of them die, and die so fast, so regularly—one a year you might say,—that I've kept saying 'who next, who next, who's to go this year?' . . .

And as they went, one by one, and still I was left . . . I tell you, Henry, the suspense was, . . . the suspense is . . . You see I'm the last now, and ever since Curtice died, I've felt this thing weighing on me. *By God, Henry, I'm afraid; I'm afraid of Death! It's horrible!* It's as though I were on the list of 'condemned' and were listening to hear my name called every minute."

"Well, so are all of us, if you come to that," observed the doctor.

"Oh, I know, I know," cried Verrill, "it is morbid and all that. But that don't help *me* any. Can you imagine me one month from to-morrow night. Think now. I'm alone, absolutely, and there is the long empty table, with the thirty places set, and the extra place, and those places are where all my old friends used to sit. And at twelve I get up and give first 'The Absent Ones,' and then 'The Guest of the Evening.' I gave those toasts last year, but there were two of us, then, and the year before there were three. But ever since Curtice died and we were narrowed down to four, this thing has been weighing on me—this idea of death, and I've conceived a horror of it—a—a dread. And now I am the last. I had no idea

this would ever happen to me; or if it did, that it would be like this. I'm shaken, Henry, shaken. I've not slept for three nights. So I've come to you. You must help me."

"So I will, by advising you. You give up the idiocy. Cut out the dinner this year; yes, and for always."

"You don't understand," replied Verrill, calmly. "It is impossible. I could not keep away. I *must* be there."

"But it's simple lunacy," expostulated the doctor. "Man, you've worked upon your nerves over this fool club and dinner, till I won't be responsible for you if you carry out this notion. Come, promise me you will take the train for, say Florida, to-morrow, and *I'll* give you stuff that will make you sleep. St. Augustine is heaven at this time of year, and I hear the tarpon have come in. Shall—"

Verrill shook his head.

"You don't understand," he repeated. "You simply don't understand. No, I shall go to the dinner. But of course I'm—I'm nervous—a little. Did I say I was scared? I didn't mean that. Oh, I'm all right; I just want you to prescribe for me, something for the nerves. Henry, death is a terrible thing,—to see 'em all struck down, twenty-

nine of 'em—splendid boys. Henry, I'm not a coward. There's a difference between cowardice and fear. For hours last night I was trying to work it out. Cowardice—that's just turning tail and running; but I shall go through that Annual Dinner, and that's ordeal enough, believe me. But fear,—it's just death in the abstract that unmans me. *That's* the thing to fear. To think that we all go along living and working and fussing from day to day, when we *know* that this great Monster, this Horror, is walking up and down the streets, and that sooner or later he'll catch us,—that we can't escape. Isn't it the greatest curse in the world! We're so used to it we don't realise the Thing. But suppose one could eliminate the Monster altogether. *Then* we'd realise how sweet life was, and we'd look back at the old days with horror—just as I do now."

"Oh, but this is rubbish," cried the doctor, "simple drivel. Manning, I'm ashamed of you. I'll prescribe for you, I suppose I've got to. But a good rough fishing-and-hunting-trip would do more for you than a gallon of drugs. If you won't go to Florida, get out of town, if it's only over Sunday. Here's your prescription, and *do* take a Friday-to-

Monday trip. Tramp in the woods, get tired, and *don't go to that dinner!*"

"You don't understand," repeated Verrill, as the two stood up. He put the prescription into his pocket-book. "You don't understand. I couldn't keep away. It's a duty, and besides—well I couldn't make you see. Good-by. This stuff will make me sleep, eh? And do my nerves good, too, you say? I see. I'll come back to you if it don't work. Good-by again. *This* door, is it? Not through the waiting-room, eh? Yes, I remember. . . . Henry, did you ever—did you ever face death yourself—I mean—"

"Nonsense, nonsense, nonsense," cried the doctor. But Verrill persisted. His back to the closed door, he continued:

"*I* did. *I* faced death once,—so you see I should know. It was when I was a lad of twenty. My father had a line of New Orleans packets and I often used to make the trip as super-cargo. One October day we were caught in the equinox off Hatteras, and before we knew it we were wondering if she would last another half-hour. Along in the afternoon there came a sea aboard, and caught me unawares. I lost my hold and felt myself going, going. . . . I was sure for ten seconds that it was

the end,—*and I saw death then, face to face!*

"And I've never forgotten it. I've only to shut my eyes to see it all, hear it all—the naked spars rocking against the grey-blue of the sky, the wrench and creak of the ship, the threshing of rope ends, the wilderness of pale-green water, the sound of rain and scud. . . . No, no, I'll not forget it. And death was a horrid specter in that glimpse I got of him. I—I don't care to see him again. Well, good-by once more."

"Good-by, Manning, and believe me, this is all hypochondria. Go and catch fish. Go shoot something, and in twenty-four hours you'll believe there's no such thing as death."

The door closed. Verrill was gone.

PART TWO

The banquet hall was in the top story of one of the loftiest sky-scrapers of the city. Along the eastern wall was a row of windows reaching from ceiling to floor, and as the extreme height of the building made it unnecessary to draw the curtains whoever was at the table could look out and over the entire city in that direction. Thus it was that Manning Verrill, on a certain night some four weeks after his interview with the doctor, sat there at his walnuts and black coffee and, absorbed, abstracted, looked out over the panorama beneath him, where the Life of a great nation centered and throbbed.

To the unenlightened the hall would have presented a strange spectacle. Down its center extended the long table. The chairs were drawn up, the covers laid. But the chairs were empty, the covers untouched; and but for the presence of the one man the hall was empty, deserted.

At the head of the table Verrill, in evening dress, a gardenia in his lapel, his napkin across his lap, an unlighted cigar in his fingers, sat motionless,

looking out over the city with unseeing eyes. Of thirty places around the table, none was distinctive, none varied. But at Verrill's right hand the thirty-first place, the place of honour, differed from all the rest. The chair was large, massive. The oak of which it was made was black, while instead of the usual array of silver and porcelain, one saw but two vessels,—an unopened bottle of wine and a large silver cup heavily chased.

From far below in the city's streets eleven o'clock struck. The sounds broke in upon Verrill's reverie and he stirred, glanced about the room and then, rising, went to the window and stood there for some time looking out.

At his feet, far beneath lay the city, twinkling with lights. In the business quarter all was dark, but from the district of theatres and restaurants there arose a glare into the night, ruddy, vibrating, with here and there a ganglion of electric bulbs upon a "fire sign" emphasising itself in a whiter radiance. Cable-cars and cabs threaded the streets with little starring eyes of coloured lights, while underneath all this blur of illumination, the people, debouching from the theatres, filled the sidewalks with tiny ant-like swarms, minute, bustling.

Farther on in the residence district, occasional

lighted windows watched with the street-lamps gazing blankly into the darkness. In particular one house was all ablaze. Every window glowed. No doubt a great festivity was in progress and Verrill could almost fancy that he heard the strains of the music, the rustle of the silks.

Then nearer at hand, but more to the eastward, where the office buildings rose in tower-like clusters and somber groups, Verrill could see a vista of open water—the harbour. Lights were moving here, green and red, as the great hoarse-voiced freighters stood out with the tide.

And beyond this was the sea itself, and more lights, very, very faint where the ships rolled leisurely in the ground swells; ships bound to and from all ports of the earth,—ships that united the nations, that brought the whole world of living men under the view of the lonely watcher in the empty Banquet Hall.

Verrill raised the window. At once a subdued murmur, prolonged, monotonous,—the same murmur as that which disengages itself from forests, from the sea, and from sleeping armies,—rose to meet him. It was the mingling of all the night noises into one great note that came simultaneously from all quarters of the horizon, infinitely vast,

infinitely deep,—a steady diapason strain like the undermost bourdon of a great organ as the wind begins to thrill the pipes.

It was the stir of life, the breathing of the Colossus, the push of the nethermost basic force, old as the world, wide as the world, the murmur of the primeval energy, coeval with the centuries, blood-brother to that spirit which in the brooding darkness before creation, moved upon the face of the waters.

And besides this, as Verrill stood there looking out, the night wind brought to him, along with the taint of the sea, the odour of the heaped-up fruit in the city's markets and even the suggestion of the vegetable gardens in the suburbs.

Across his face, like the passing of a long breath, he felt the abrupt sensation of life, indestructible, persistent.

But absorbed in other things, Verrill, unmoved, and only dimly comprehending, closed the window and turned back into the room. At his place stood an unopened bottle and a glass as yet dry. He removed the foil from the neck of the bottle, but after looking at his watch, set it down again without drawing the cork. It lacked some fifteen minutes to midnight.

Once again, as he had already done so many times that evening, Verrill wiped the moisture from his forehead. He shut his teeth against the slow thick labouring of his heart. He was alone. The sense of isolation, of abandonment, weighed down upon him intolerably as he looked up and down the the empty table. Alone, alone; all the rest were gone, and he stood there, in the solitude of that midnight; he, last of all that company whom he had known and loved. Over and over again he muttered:

"All, all are gone, the old familiar faces." Then slowly Verrill began to make the circuit of the table, reading, as if from a roll call, the names written on the cards which lay upon the place-plates. "Anderson, . . . Evans, . . . Copeland, —dear old 'crooked-face' Copeland, his camp companion in those Maine fishing-trips of the old days, dead now these ten years. . . . Stryker,—'Buff' Stryker they had called him, dead,—he had forgotten how long,—drowned in his yacht off the Massachusetts coast; Harris, died of typhoid somewhere in Italy; Dick Herndon, killed in a mine accident in Mexico; Rice, old 'Whitey Rice' a suicide in a California cattle town; Curtice, carried off by fever in Durban, South Africa." Thus around the

whole table he moved, telling the bead-roll of death, following in the footsteps of the Monster who never relented, who never tired, who never, never,—never forgot.

His own turn would come some day. Verrill, sunken into his chair, put his hands over his eyes. Yes his own turn would come. There was no escape. That dreadful face would rise again before his eyes. He would bow his back to the scourge of nations, he would roll helpless beneath the wheels of the great car. How to face that prospect with fortitude! How to look into those terrible grey eyes with calm! Oh, the terror of that gorgon face, oh, the horror of those sightless, lightless grey eyes!

But suddenly midnight struck. He heard the strokes come booming upward from the city streets. His vigil was all but over.

Verrill opened the bottle of wine, breaking the seal that had been affixed to the cork on the night of the first meeting of the club. Filling his glass, he rose in his place. His eyes swept the table, and while for the last time the memories came thronging back, his lips formed the words:

"To the Absent Ones: to you, Curtice, Anderson, Brill, to you, Copeland, to you, Stryker, to

you, Arnold, to you all, my old comrades, all you old familiar faces who are absent to-night."

He emptied the glass, but immediately filled it again. The last toast was to be drunk, the last of all. Verrill, the glass raised, straightened himself.

But even as he stood there, glass in hand, he shivered slightly. He made note of it for the moment, yet his emotions had so shaken him during all that evening that he could well understand the little shudder that passed over him for a moment.

But he caught himself glancing at the windows. All were shut. The doors of the hall were closed, the flames of the chandeliers were steady. Whence came then this certain sense of coolness that so suddenly had invaded the air? The coolness was not disagreeable, but none the less the temperature of the room had been lowered, at least so he could fancy. Yet already he was dismissing the matter from his mind. No doubt the weather had changed suddenly.

In the next second, however, another peculiar circumstance forced itself upon his attention. The stillness of the Banquet Hall, placed as it was, at the top of one of the highest buildings in the city was no matter of comment to Verrill. He was long since familiar with it. But for all that, even

through the closed windows, and through the medium of steel and brick and marble that composed the building the indefinite murmur of the city's streets had always made itself felt in the hall. It was faint, yet it was distinct. That bourdon of life to which he had listened that very evening was not wholly to be shut out, yet now, even in this supreme moment of the occasion it was impossible for Verrill to ignore the fancy that an unusual stillness had all at once widened about him, like the widening of unseen ripples. There was not a sound, and he told himself that stillness such as this was only the portion of the deaf. No faintest tremor of noise rose from the streets. The vast building itself had suddenly grown as soundless as the unplumbed depth of the sea. But Verrill shook himself; all evening fancies such as these had beseiged him, even now they were prolonging the ordeal. Once this last toast drunk and he was released from his duty: He raised his glass again, and then in a loud clear voice he said:

"Gentlemen, I give you the toast of the evening."

And as he emptied the glass, a quick, light footstep sounded in the corridor outside the door.

Verrill looked up in great annoyance. The corridor led to but one place, the door of the Ban-

quet Hall, and any one coming down the corridor at so brisk a pace could have but one intention—that of entering the hall. Verrill frowned at the idea of an intruder. His orders had been of the strictest. That a stranger should thrust himself upon his company at this of all moments was exasperating.

But the footsteps drew nearer, and as Verrill stood frowning at the door at the far end of the hall, it opened.

A gentleman came in, closed the door behind him, and faced about. Verrill scrutinised him with an intent eye.

He was faultlessly dressed, and just by his manner of carrying himself in his evening clothes Verrill knew that here was breeding, distinction. The newcomer was tall, slim. Also he was young; Verrill, though he could not have placed his age with any degree of accuracy, would none the less have disposed of the question by setting him down as a young man. But Verrill further observed that the gentleman was very pale, even his lips lacked colour. However, as he looked closer, he discovered that this pallor was hardly the result of any present emotion, but was rather constitutional.

There was a moment's silence as the two looked

at each other the length of the Hall; then with a peculiarly pleasant smile the stranger came forward drawing off his white glove and extending his hand. He seemed so at home, so perfectly at his ease, and at the same time so much of what Verrill was wont to call a "thoroughbred fellow" that the latter found it impossible to cherish any resentment. He preferred to believe that the stranger had made some readily explained mistake which would be rectified in their first spoken words. Thus it was that he was all the more non-plussed when the stranger took him by the hand with words: "This is Mr. Manning Verrill, of course. I am very glad to meet you again, sir. Two such as you and I who have once been so intimate, should never forget each other."

Verrill had it upon his lips to inform the other that he had something the advantage of him; but at the last moment he was unable to utter the words. The newcomer's pleasure in the meeting was so hearty, so spontaneous, that he could not quite bring himself to jeopardise it—at the outset at least—by a confession of implied unfriendliness; so instead he clumsily assumed the other's manner, and, though deeply perplexed, managed to attain a certain heartiness as he exclaimed: "But you have

come very late. I have already dined, and by the way, let me explain why you find me here alone, in a deserted Banquet Hall with covers laid for so many."

"Indeed, you need not explain," replied the stranger. "I am a member of your club, you know."

A member of the club, this total stranger! Verrill could not hide a frown of renewed perplexity; surely this face was not one of any friend he ever had. "A charter member, you might say," the other continued; "but singularly enough, I have never been able to attend one of the meetings until now. Of us all I think I have been the busiest—and the one most widely traveled. Such must be my excuses."

At the moment an explanation occurred to Verrill. It was within the range of the possible that the newcomer was an old member of the club, some sojourner in a foreign country, whose death had been falsely reported. Possibly Verrill had lost track of him. It was not always easy to "place" at once every one of the thirty. The two sat down, but almost immediately Verrill exclaimed:

"Pardon me, but—that chair. The omen would be so portentous! You have taken the wrong

place. You who are a member of the club! You must remember that we reserved that chair—the one you are occupying."

But the stranger smiled calmly.

"I defy augury, and I snap my fingers at the portent. Here is my place and here I choose to remain."

"As you will," answered Verrill, "but it is a singular choice. It is not conducive to appetite."

"My dear Verrill," answered the other, "I shall not dine, if you will permit me to say so. It is very late and my time is limited. I can stay but a short while at best. I have much to do to-night after I leave you,—much good I hope, much good. For which," he added rather sadly, "I shall receive no thanks, only abuse, only abuse, my dear Verrill." Verrill was only half listening. He was looking at the other's face, and as he looked, he wondered; for the brow was of the kind fitted for crowns, and from beneath glowed the glance of a King. The mouth seemed to have been shaped by the utterance of the commands of Empire. The whole face was astonishing, full of power tempered by a great kindliness. Verrill could not keep his gaze from those wonderful, calm grey eyes. Who was this extraordinary man met under

such strange circumstances, alone and in the night, in the midst of so many dead memories, and surrounded by that inexplicable stillness, that sudden, profound peace? And what was the subtle magnetism that upon sight, drew him so powerfully to the stranger? Kingly he was, but Verrill seemed to feel that he was more than that. He was—could be—a friend, such a friend as in all their circle of dead companions he had never known. In his company he knew he need never be ashamed of weakness, human, natural, ordained weakness, need not be ashamed because of the certainty of being perfectly and thoroughly understood. Thus it was that when the stranger had spoken the words "—only abuse, only abuse, my dear Verrill." Verrill, starting from his muse, answered quickly: "What, abuse, you! in return for good! You astonish me."

"'Abuse' is the mildest treatment I dare expect; it will no doubt be curses. Of all personages, I am the one most cruelly misunderstood. My friends are few, few,—oh, so pitiably few." "Of whom may I be one?" exclaimed Verrill. "I hope," said the stranger gravely, "we shall be the best of friends. When we met before I am afraid, my appearance was too abrupt and—what shall I

say—unpleasant to win your good will." Verrill in some embarrassment, framed a lame reply; but the other continued:

"You do not remember, as I can easily understand. My manner at that time was against me. It was a whim, but I chose to be most forbidding on that occasion. I am a very Harlequin in my moods; Harlequin did I say, my dear fellow I am the Prince of Masqueraders."

"But a Prince in all events," murmured Verrill, half to himself.

"Prince and Slave," returned the other, "slave to circumstance."

"Are we not all—," began Verrill, but the stranger continued:

"Slave to circumstance, slave to time, slave to natural laws, none so abject as I, in my servility. When the meanest, the lowest, the very weakest calls, I must obey. On the other hand, none so despotic as I, none so absolute. When I summon, the strongest must respond; when I command, the most powerful must obey. My profession, my dear Verrill, is an arduous one."

"Your profession is, I take it," observed Verrill, "that of a physician."

"You may say so," replied the other, "and you

may also say an efficient one. But I am always the last to be summoned. I am a last resource; my remedy is a heroic one. But it prevails—inevitably. No pain, my dear Verrill, so sharp that I cannot allay, no anguish so great that I cannot soothe."

"Then perhaps you may prescribe for me," said Verrill. "Of late I have been perturbed. I have lived under a certain strain, certain contingencies threaten, which, no doubt unreasonably, I have come to dread. I am shaken, nervous, fearful. My own doctor has been unable to help me. Perhaps you—"

The stranger had already opened the bottle of wine which stood by his plate, and filled the silver cup. He handed it to Verrill.

"Drink," he said.

Verrill hesitated:

"But this wine," he protested: "This cup—pardon me, it was reserved—"

"Drink," repeated the stranger. "Trust me."

He took Verrill's glass in which he had drunk the toasts and which yet contained a little wine. He pressed the silver cup into Verrill's hands.

"Drink," he urged for the third time.

Verrill took the cup, and the stranger raised his glass.

"To our better acquaintance," he said.

But Verrill, at length at the end of all conjecture, cried out, the cup still in his hand:

"Your toast is most appropriate, sir. A better acquaintance with you, I assure you, would be most pleasing to me. But I must ask your pardon for my stupidity. Where have we met before? Who are you, and what is your name?"

The stranger did not immediately reply, but fixed his grave grey eyes upon Verrill's. For a moment he held his gaze in his own. Then as the seconds slipped by, the first indefinite sense of suspicion flashed across Verrill's mind, flashed and faded, returned once more, faded again, and left him wondering. Then as the stranger said:

"Do you remember,—it was long ago. Do you remember the sight of naked spars rocking against a grey torn sky, a ship wrenching and creaking, wrestling with the wind, a world of pale green surges, the gale singing through the cordage, and then as the sea swept the decks—ah, you *do* remember."

For Verrill had started suddenly, and with the movement, full recognition, complete, unequivocal,

gleamed suddenly in his eyes. There was a long silence while he returned the gaze of the other, now no longer a stranger. At length Verrill spoke, drawing a long breath.

"Ah . . . it is you . . . at last."

"Well!"

Verrill smiled:

"It *is* well, I had imagined it would be so different,—when you did come. But as it is—," he extended his hand, "I am very glad to meet you."

"Did I not tell you," said the other, "that of all the world, I am the most cruelly misunderstood?"

"But you confessed to the masquerade."

"Oh, blind, blind, not to see behind the foolish masque. Come, we have not yet drunk."

He placed the cup in Verrill's hands, and once again raised the glass.

"To our better acquaintance," he said.

"To our better acquaintance," echoed Verrill. He drained the cup.

"The lees were bitter," he observed.

"But the effect?"

"Yes, it is calming—already, exquisitely so. It is not—as I have imagined for so long, deadening,

on the contrary, it is invigorating, revivifying. I feel born again."

The other rose: "Then there is no need," he said, "to stay here any longer. Come, shall we be going?"

"Yes, yes, I am ready," answered Verrill. "Look," he exclaimed, pointing to the windows." "Look—it is morning."

Low in the east, the dawn was rising over the city. A new day was coming; the stars were paling, the night was over.

"That is true," said Verrill's new friend. "Another day is coming. It is time we went out to meet it."

They rose and passed down the length of the Banquet Hall. He who had called himself the great Physician, the Servant of the Humble, the Master of Kings, the Prince of Masqueraders, held open the door for Verrill to pass. But when the man had gone out, the Prince paused a moment, and looked back upon the deserted Banquet Hall, lit partly by the steady electrics, partly by the pale light of morning, that now began with ever-increasing radiance to stream through the eastern windows. Then he stretched forth his hand and laid his touch upon a button in the wall.

Instantly the lights sank, vanished; for a moment the hall seemed dark.

He went out quietly, shutting the door behind him.

* * * * * *

And the Banquet Hall remained deserted, lonely, empty, yet it was neither dark nor lifeless. Stronger and stronger grew the flood of light that burned roseate toward the zenith as the sun came up. It penetrated to every corner of the room, and the drops of wine left in the bottom of the glasses flashed like jewels in the radiance. From without, from the city's streets, came the murmur of increasing activity. Through the night it had droned on, like the low-pitched diapason of some vast organ, but now as the sun rose, it swelled in volume. Louder it grew and ever louder. Its sound-waves beat upon the windows of the hall. They invaded the hall itself.

It was the symphony of energy, the vast orchestration of force, the pæan of an indestructible life, coeval with the centuries, renascent, ordained, eternal.

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